The RED FLAG

GEORGES OHNET

Author of
"THE IRONMASTER"

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THE RED FLAG

BY

GEORGES OHNET

AUTHOR OF

"THE IRONMASTER"

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THE RED FLAG

CHAPTER I

A BENEVOLENT DESPOTISM

AT the confluence of the Verveille and the Moselle, on the very frontiers of Alsace and Lorraine, stands the town of Lehrange, situated on a sloping hillside. It is conspicuous for its red-roofed houses and the towering, black chimneys of its various works. The upper portion of the town is sheltered by verdant forests of oak trees, stretching away into the Ardennes. Lehrange, equally distant from Nancy and Metz, is a garrison as well as a manufacturing town. A brigade of dragoons and four companies of artillery have taken up their quarters there. Metallurgy, and coal and iron mining form the main industries of the place. There are the Lehrange works, which, with the adjacent houses depending on them, make up the whole town

Gaspard Didelod, founder of the world-famed establishment, was the first to exploit this fruitful territory in 1817. He was the ancestor, the source of the prosperity of the family, now so closely allied to that of the whole neighbourhood. Lehrange and Didelod are as inseparable as Creusot and Schneider, both places being the centre in which the activity of a manufacturer of genius has been developed. At the

present time, Armand, grandson of the great Didelod, is a man of fifty, the Socialist deputy for Meurthe-et-Moselle; a Socialist not from political snobbery, but from sincere conviction, however, irreconcilable might be regarded M. Didelod's fortune and his theories of equality.

The deputy's father and grandfather had held quite different opinions from those of their successor. The former had been a staunch supporter of the Second Empire, the latter passionately attached to Louis-Philippe. Both had been deputies for the district, paving the way for the important position and enormous fortune to which Armand Didelod was to succeed. As the latter had been born to a fortune of forty million francs, the Lehrange-Steingel works, and an excellent social standing by reason of marriages into the best families of the French aristocracy, a strange detachment of mind was necessary to enable him to sympathise with the representatives of the most advanced political party. It was this very thing that his enemies, and even some of his friends, could not forgive in him.

Lehrange had been founded at a much more recent date than Steingel. When Lorraine had been annexed by Germany, the works had been cut into two, so to speak, and Steingel's forges found themselves situated on the territory of the conqueror. What might have been a source of weakness to the works in their divided condition, proved to be a source of prosperity. Built on either side of the frontier, the works had taken on a considerable development and come into serious competition with Crusot in the matter of machine-construction. The dual works of Lehrange and Stein-

gel, though so favourable from an industrial and a commercial point of view, had very peculiar consequences, politically speaking.

The German Government had manifested a certain amount of suspicion at the idea of a Frenchman controlling works situated on annexed territory, and so a separation had been effected, placing Steingel under the management of Didelod's brother-in-law, M. Jules Reismann. The latter, having chosen to become a nationalised German, was quite at home in Steingel, and so firmly established in the district that he had been appointed its representative in the Reichstag, where he took his seat as a Liberal and a Catholic. As a matter of fact, Lehrange and Steingel formed only one works, the profits from each entering one common fund. Whenever the economic situation happened to be bad in France, the orders were carried through on better terms in Germany. The two works, connected by one common railway and separated by the narrow Verveille which ran along the frontier, formed one vast manufacturing domain, whose interests were identical, though the nationalties were distinct.

Opinions differed greatly. The Socialist Didelod spent his whole life in proclaiming the needs of the working classes, the claims of the proletariat. He believed in practising what he preached, and democratic institutions rapidly multiplied in Lehrange. Reismann, the aristocrat, despotically ruling his workmen, as though they had been Prussian recruits, would not countenance the least discussion regarding contracts for work. This, however, did not hinder him from paying the closest personal attention to the well-being and comfort of the men, and lavishing on them

advantages equal to those obtaining at Lehrange. The only difference was that he practised generosity with a strictness that was almost military in its nature. The German feudal hierarchy made itself felt in the administration of Steingel, whilst the French social decline was evident in everything that took place in Lehrange.

These two establishments were as unlike each other as possible in their working. The results were good on both sides. The only difference was that everything seemed in better order, more methodical and stable in Steingel, while in Lehrange Socialism was rampant, the workmen arrogating to themselves rights which, had they been exercised before a master of less advanced ideas than Didelod, would have been a cause of continual strife. The state of things at Lehrange was quite unique, in that the political leaders were forced to confess that the master was more of a Socialist than his staff of workmen, and that, whenever they presumed to demand some reform or other, he generally did more for them than they had asked. Didelod had refused his men nothing, except the works themselves. In their private councils the high priests of Collectivism said: "A master like Didelod does more harm to our party than a hundred reactionary masters. We have no *raison d'être* whatever, so long as he acts in this way."

After all, no one could have managed the works as he did, and there is not the slightest doubt that, had he transformed it into a co-operative establishment to be managed by the workmen themselves, ruin would speedily have overtaken them. Here was an object-lesson which the revolutionaries looked upon as dis-

astrous, for it proved their own theories to be absurb. The application of the regime of mutualism, the only possible solution of social difficulties and labour crises, was being practised on a large scale at Lehrange, and its results were undeniable. The workmen certainly earned higher wages than if they had been on their own account, and that without risk or stoppage of output.

On entering the works, each of them was presented with a superannuation fund book, to which a monthly contribution was paid by master and man alike. From the very first day he started work, he was put into possession of a house and garden, which became his own absolutely at the end of twenty years by the payment of an annual rental of five hundred francs. Public employment was found for those on the pension list: gate-keepers at level crossings; overseers of locks and sluice gates, and such posts. Most of the old people, however, having sufficient to live upon, preferred to remain at home, cultivating their own garden produce, or engaged in light occupations which kept them occupied and enabled them to increase their ordinary livelihood. Some of these good people, who had worked for Didelod's father, had numerous children, all living under the same roof in ease and comfort.

It was not material comfort alone that had been assured at Lehrange; M. Didelod had instituted a singing school and a band of musicians, who had carried off quite a number of prizes in district competitions. There was also a library and even a concert hall in which theatrical performances were given by companies on tour. The most remarkable features,

however, of this model manufacturing town were the hospital, the almshouses, and the school. The master had made it a point of honour to excel in this department of his efforts, and the two former were perfect types of sanitary arrangement. At the Paris Exhibition of 1900 his school had won for him the highest award obtainable. It provided instruction for three hundred children of both sexes. The Lehrange "Echo," which he ran, gave the news of the day. Its politics were very mild, showing what little need the head of the Lehrange works felt for propagating his views. The vicar, as well as the most advanced politician in the place, might read the "Echo" without finding in it anything calculated to shock his feelings.

This state of calm prosperity had lasted a long time, assuring for the district a condition of unparalleled peace and comfort. The town had gradually spread out over an extent of territory double that it occupied after the annexation, and now numbered fifteen thousand inhabitants, six thousand of whom were employed at the works. The rest consisted of pensioners and middle-class people, attracted by the advantages the town offered, relatives of the workmen, and finally dealers and business men, who drew large profits from the necessities of a well-to-do population, which did not take the trouble to go to Nancy or to Toul for whatever it needed.

A new industry had been started: the manufacture of curved-wood furniture. An artistic spirit was beginning to make itself felt in this corner of Lorraine, and there was already a manufactory of a hundred cabinet-makers, who inculcated into the minds of the old-fashioned metallurgists loftier and less common-

place ideas. At the same time, there had been set up a current of opinion which was destined very speedily to have an unexpected influence over the peace and calm of Lehrange. A Parisian element had been added to the local workmen, consisting of a few clever draughtsmen, the heads of the furniture department, and their bold, fault-finding dispositions had acquired for them considerable influence over their easy-going companions.

The furniture works, at the head of which was a former joiner named Neumans, was situated on the banks of the Verveille. A locked weir supplied motive power and light, which the municipality, by arrangement with Neumans, distributed throughout the town. The very moment work stopped, the fall of water was utilised to charge the accumulators which supplied light to the whole of Lehrange. It was a symbol of the work which the cabinet-makers wrought in the minds of the inhabitants of Lehrange, into, which, beneath their influence, new flashes of light began to penetrate.

Suddenly—as though at the raising of a curtain, a drama rehearsed in silence by unknown actors was beginning on the very stage where M. Didelod had hitherto held undisputed sway—a revolutionary outburst appeared in Lehrange. A slight dispute between Neumans and one of his Parisian workmen, which might have been settled in five minutes, revealed the existence of a trade union of the Lehrange cabinet-makers. The master had been offered an ultimatum. With a feeling of anger which almost threw him into an apoplectic fit, the furniture manufacturer found himself in the position of being threat-

ened with an immediate strike, unless he accepted the claims of the committee. Within a few moments the news had reached the Town Hall and was telephoned to Didelod as he was finishing lunch at his home, the Château de Badonviller. At first he was thunderstruck with amazement, but the spirit of domination speedily returned. Such a thing was quite intolerable, he said, in a well-organised town like Lehrange; he must make short work of such tendencies towards disorder and mischief, setting as they did so bad an example to other towns.

After swallowing his coffee he jumped into his carriage, and ordered the coachman to drive to the Town Hall. There he found the master of the elementary school, who was now engaged in secretarial work, and burst upon him with words:

"So all Neumans' men have gone mad! What's the meaning of it all? Gaudin, have you any knowledge of this trades union? A committee in Lehrange! Who is at the head of it?"

"Tournemarie. . . ."

"Of course! How could it be any one else than Tournemarie? The very man whom Neumans and I, last year, rescued from the clutches of the bailiff who had come for him all the way from Paris regarding money he owed. . . ."

"He has a wife and children, sir," interposed Gaudin gently.

"The deuce! Because he has a wife and children, is that any excuse for him to turn a whole industry upside down ,on the plea that his master . . . After all, what is the trouble between him and his master?"

"M. Neumans objected to Tournemarie leaving

work, for three consecutive days, at five o'clock instead of six."

"Neumans is quite right; And I suppose he deducted three hours' pay?"

"Yes, sir."

Didelod walked up and down the room, a prey to violent excitement. The whole social problem, on which he had so often spoken in public, had suddenly demanded a solution at his very door; he had a vague feeling that he was on the point of taking sides in a quarrel which might have a terrible reaction in his own business.

"It is simply the question of the eight hours' work day which has come up in Lehrange. Tournemarie, evidently a propagandist in both words and deeds, is applying the regulations he wishes to operate, on his own initiative! Can he form any idea of the economic consequences to the industry by which he himself and so many of his companions earn their livelihood, which would be involved in the reduction of a single hour's work per day? Would the manufacturer be able to carry through his orders, deliver his goods punctually and resist foreign competition? To such considerations he is altogether indifferent. In obedience to revolutionary instructions, he wishes to force Neumans to grant a concession enabling the union to insert the thin end of the wedge. . . ."

Didelod came to a halt, both in his walk and his speech. With flushed face and furious glance, he stood facing the poor, servile Gaudin, and, bringing down his hand heavily on the desk, said:

"To think that they dare to speak to me of a com-

mittee in Lehrange! I am the committee! Have I ever waited to be asked to grant a concession of any kind, without anticipating their desires? Like my father, I am their friend; they are well aware they can rely upon me, that I will never draw back from any sacrifice undertaken in their interests, that I would even rather give up my fortune than see them lack anything. But if they are so ill-advised, after all I have done for them, as to rebel against my authority . . ."

A vague gesture ended the sentence which Didelod, although carried away by the violence of his feelings, had not the courage to complete. It was a peremptory, imperious gesture which terrified Gaudin, and even Didelod himself, on reflection, thought that he had gone rather too far in expressing his displeasure. This Socialist, however, was a man of authority, and authority can manifest itself only in one way. This he fully understood as he now found himself in presence of something which might destroy the hitherto perfect harmony of his political life. He resumed his walk to and fro in the room, to calm his heated brain. Finally he asked Gaudin:

"So all the cabinet-makers have come out, have they?"

"Yes, sir, and they declare they will not resume work until M. Neumans takes Tournemarie back."

"And Neumans refuses?"

"You know what kind of a man M. Neumans is; very calm and quiet, jogging along peacefully day by day, but determined to carry out what he has decided upon, come what may. He has told his workmen that Tournemarie was out and that he should remain out."

"And where is Tournemarie?"

"At 'The Pineapple,' along with the committee."

"The public-house, of course. Well, Gaudin, be good enough to go over and ask Mr. Tournemarie if he will come and speak to me."

Gaudin picked up his hat and disappeared down the stairs. He was a short, pale-looking man, with an immense forehead and hair thrust backward. There was an expression of sadness about his mouth, whilst his weak eyes required the services of glasses. His face was clean-shaven, and his black garments might have caused him to be taken for a priest, dressed as a civilian. Gaudin was a bachelor, living with his sister, an old maid of sixty, who had brought him up from childhood. He was absolutely devoted to Didelod, living in a continual state of enthusiasm at the latter's slightest word or deed. He reverenced him for his benevolence and liberality—his deference to the poor and his politeness towards his inferiors. The manufacturer's humanitarian ideas and philanthropic institutions filled Gaudin with admiration. Didelod, who knew that Gaudin made a fetish of him, liked him for it and carefully kept aflame the fanatic's zeal. The people in the neighbourhood would say: "Ah! Gaudin is in Didelod's good books. If you want anything from the master, get Gaudin to ask for it." The virtuous Gaudin, however, rebelled against any abuse of his influence. For the slightest cause he would recommend Didelod to refuse the petitions of those whose spokesman he was. At all events, he refused with energetic modesty to accept any favours for himself. The incident of the *"palmes académiques"* was well known. Without giving any hint to Gaudin, M. Dide-

lod had spoken for him to the Minister, asking on his behalf for the little violet ribbon. Joyfully he had returned home, carrying the tiny box containing the insignia of an Officer of the Academy. No sooner had he seen the decoration than the simple-minded Gaudin, without giving his master a chance to explain matters, exclaimed:

"Ah, sir! what a good idea! How pleased M. Grangel will be!"

M. Grangel was Gaudin's colleague in the second class of the school.

"What! M. Grangel?" said Didelod. "This has nothing to do with M. Grangel; it is for you, Gaudin."

The latter turned pale.

"Impossible, sir!" he said. "M. Grangel is the one who deserves it more than I do."

"What's that you are telling me?"

"He is my senior."

"But you are also town clerk."

"Exactly, an additional favour for me."

"An additional service, rather."

"For which I am well paid."

"Well, that's beside the question; I made the request on your behalf, the Minister granted it. It is your duty to accept this distinction."

"I would not insult you, sir, by refusing a token of your goodwill which deeply affects me; but, all the same, I shall keep the ribbon locked up in my drawer."

"What!"

"I cannot possibly wear it so long as M. Grangel has not one also."

"Come, that's too bad! Do you intend to force me to request the Minister to grant him one too?"

"Far be it from me to have such a thought in my head, sir. All the same, I shall be extremely grateful if no mention whatever is made of this distinction until my colleague has also obtained it."

It was useless for M. Didelod to fly into a rage or to try the gentle art of persuasion on Gaudin, the latter would listen to nothing. The deputy was obliged to pay a second visit to the Minister, and he came back with a second case containing the strip of violet ribbon. Only so could Gaudin be induced to confess, with so small degree of embarrassment, that his colleague was being favoured as much as himself. Didelod said regarding him:

"Gaudin is a good old soul, though quite out of his element in these modern times. . . . He ought to have lived in the times of the Benedictines, spending his days in a cell copying manuscripts or illuminating missals. I really believe the dear old fellow would leap into a fire to prevent a hair of my head being singed."

In his inmost soul he rather despised him for all his devotion, and little would have been needed to induce him to confess that this noble character was the veriest simpleton alive, after all.

The mayor's reflections at this point were interrupted by the entrance into the room of Tournemarie and Gaudin. In striking contrast with the schoolmaster, the cabinet-maker offered every appearance of a *bon vivant*. Short and stout, with heightened complexion and flashing eyes, Tournemarie came forward, smiling.

"Ah! ah! What is this I hear?" asked M. Didelod from the other end of the room. "So you have come out of work, have you? Just take a seat, if you don't mind."

"Not at all, sir," said the cabinet-maker, seating himself at a respectful distance. "As you know, I am always at your disposal, and ready to obey your orders."

"I have no orders to give you, M. Tournemarie," declared the mayor, "though I think I have the right to offer you some advice. What is now going on at Lehrange is very wrong, not so much from the material point of view—though a stoppage of work is always a matter to be deplored—as from the moral standpoint. There is not a living soul about who can remember a strike in this district."

"That is quite true, M. Didelod, so long as your father and yourself have been the only masters. But now there are others of inferior merit. The working classes . . ."

M. Didelod gave a start and interrupted Tournemarie:

"What do you mean by the working classes? I hear a great deal of the working classes, though I have never seen them. . . . I know what workmen are . . . but the working classes! . . . What do they consist of and whom are they represented by?"

A keen glance shot forth from the cabinet-maker's eyes and the muscles of his mouth contracted. All the same, he quietly replied:

"The working classes consist of all such as labour for a fixed wage, without any chance of obtaining possession of the industry which their efforts keep

going. The working classes are represented by their unions."

M. Didelod took time to consider the full significance of the reply. With a shake of the head he said:

"So the working classes, by means of their unions, are preparing to declare war on their employers."

"Ah, M. Didelod!" protested the cabinet-maker, "if only all employers of labour were like you! . . ."

"Well! well! Of course, but I have nothing to do with this. Has M. Neumans shown himself unreasonable?"

"He is a man who will listen to no one. He will brook no opposition to whatever he decides upon."

"After all, what is it you want from him?"

"An eight hours' working day."

"That's a very serious matter, M. Tournemarie. As you are aware, I shrink before no difficulty or sacrifice in order to improve the condition of my workmen. The eight hours' working day, however, let me inform you, is an international question. We cannot adopt it unless our neighbours do so as well."

"Some one must begin."

"Why should it always be our own country?"

"Because it is the most intelligent."

"Perhaps the most venturesome."

"But if your own workmen were to ask you for an eight hours' working day, M. Didelod, what reply would you give them?"

"I should have to see about it, M. Tournemarie," said the mayor quietly. "Fortunately we have not reached that point yet! I, a Member of the Chamber, however, could not adopt such a measure, which would

at a single stroke, compromise the whole of the industries of France. . . ."

"What! You would refuse?" exclaimed Tournemarie excitedly. "Then on whom shall we rely? Nevertheless, you call yourself a Socialist."

"Not a day passes without my proving that I am one. But I have never said that I was a revolutionist."

"Ah! That's how the matter stands!" exclaimed the workman. "No sooner are you brought to task, than you try to run away. You masters are all alike! A revolutionist! No sooner are you asked to give a little more material comfort to those who slave themselves to death for you, than you screen yourselves behind the very rules and regulations you yourself have set up. Very well! In future you will have to consult those you exploit. . . ."

"Not an other word, Tournemarie!" interrupted Didelods sternly. "I will not permit you to continue in this strain! You are taking advantage of my forbearance towards you to threaten me. I am not one to be impressed by such an attitude, or to be afraid of any one. My workmen are devoted to me. . . ."

At these words Tournemarie's countenance assumed so insolent an expression, so mocking a whistle escaped his lips, that M. Didelod stared at him in amazement. The cabinet-maker, taking advantage of the mayor's evident dismay, rose to his feet, and, in accents of affected respect, said:

"I beg your pardon, sir, for the useless words I have spoken. I ought to have exercised more self-restraint. I came to you in an attitude of defer-

ence and am ready to do all I can do to show you that I act in obedience to a spirit of conciliation."

"That is better," said Didelod, fixing his eyes on the cabinet-maker's face. "But now we must arrive at some practical conclusion. Will you accept arbitration with M. Neumans?"

"Who will be the arbitrator?"

"In the ordinary course of events it ought to be the magistrate. As, however, I do not desire to give this matter an official bearing, I, as friendly to both sides, offer my services to you."

Tournemarie, after a moment's reflection, looked up and said:

"Be it so! I accept, in the name of our union."

"Now I will go over to see M. Neumans and lay the plan before him. In case he accepts . . . as I hope he will . . . I will inform you of the fact, through Gaudin. . . . In that case, what will be your line of procedure?"

"We will send you our delegates."

"And you will not be one of them?"

"No, so as to avoid any accusation of stirring up the smouldering embers of a dispute with which I am personally concerned."

"Good; you are acting very wisely."

"Pleased to know that you approve of my opinion, sir," said Tournemarie.

As he was leaving the room M. Didelod held out his hand, which the cabinet-maker shook somewhat shamefully. No sooner had he gone than Gaudin reappeared:

"Was he disposed to listen to reason?" he asked.

"Certainly," replied M. Didelod, in tones of frank assurance. "I knew from the outset that everything could be settled quietly. It will be a matter of arbitration. The workmen will be promised a kind of semi-satisfaction. I will talk Neumans over, and the question of a strike will be at an end. I will call on him at once. . . ."

Gaudin, with bowed head, was gazing silently at his hat lying on the desk. Finally, thrusting back his long hair, which fell over his temples, he spoke in trembling accents:

"Excuse me, sir, if I appear to insist on the matter, but I should like to know if Tournemarie seemed at all disposed to come to an understanding?"

"What! You seem to doubt what I am telling you!" said Didelod, coming over to Gaudin.

"What you are telling me, never!" declared the schoolmaster eagerly. "What you may have been told, however, is another matter. . . ."

"Ah, Gaudin, evidently you know more than I do about all this. Are you keeping something back from me?"

"Heaven forbid! I have not the faintest desire to cause you any futile anxiety. On the other hand, I feel it my duty to prepare you for the preparations that are being made. . . ."

"Ah!"

"I have just heard the news from the usher who came in a few minutes ago, whilst you were engaged with Tournemarie. This is the bill he found this morning stuck on the walls of the Town Hall. He immediately tore it down and brought it to me."

Overwhelmed with surprise, Didelod read the fol-

lowing words, on a placard with a background of red:—

"Members of the working classes,—You have been slaves long enough in the prisons of the capitalists. Fling down your tools, the symbol of your slavery, and come out on strike to win back your freedom. Up, every one of you, against the tyranny of employers of labour! The upper classes have no heart, they have gold in its place. Strike at their money-bags by stopping work, and you will bring them to terms. All trades and industries are alike. Miners and smiths; cabinet-makers, and tillers of the soil; unite, and the future will be yours. Factories must belong to the workmen, the land to the labourers, and capital to those whose toil has produced it. Down with the wage system! Economic equality in a united communism!

"Signed: The Workmen's Federal Committee."

M. Didelod read the placard aloud, whilst Gaudin, with trembling hands, held it up at arm's length.

"Well! a pretty revolutionary morsel indeed!" said the deputy for Lehrange. "So we have a Workmen's Federal Committee, have we? I am sorry the names of the fine fellows of which it consists are not given, for it would give me much pleasure to meet them. They set forth their claims in a vague enough style. All this is pure nonsense; everybody knows how much it is worth. The main thing, however, is to come to close quarters with the question at issue; we must find out what it is they are asking for. . . . You see, Gaudin, to make use of the communists' programme in a discussion on economics is simply

beginning by saying: we want nothing. For the programme of communism is. . . . nothing at all, a sheer blank!"

"I believe you, monsieur."

"You may well believe me, for it is the truth!" said Didelod, slightly raising his voice. "One must be a perfect idiot if he imagines that men can live without a social hierarchy or the capital of individuals. Down with the wage system! That is soon said, but what shall we have to follow? Everybody living on his income? Who will give them their incomes? The State? Error! Criminal folly! Yes, criminal, Gaudin, do you hear?"

M. Didelod had turned crimson and was gesticulating violently. The blood rushed to his head, and his experience as a business man showed him, strikingly epitomised, the disastrous consequences of a Collectivist Utopia.

"And yet it is by such absurdities that the masses are driven to revolution, as though, socially, there could be a question of anything else than evolution."

"Things change rapidly nowadays, sir," said Gaudin gently. "Two years ago they removed the crucifix from the school. Last year the Augustine sisters, who did all the hospital work, were disbanded; and this year the separation of Church and State has taken place. . . . And now they are asking for the suppression of individual ownership and the abolition of private property. . . ."

"Gaudin!" exclaimed M. Didelod forcibly, "the reforms we have carried through have been necessary!"

"Just what the Collectivists say regarding those they now ask for!"

"Gaudin! this is most revolutionary language! Is it possible that you too have been tainted with the poison of anarchy? I can scarcely believe, Gaudin, that it is you who are giving utterance to sentiments, the enormity of which . . ."

With a sad smile on his lips Gaudin interrupted the mayor:

"No, sir, my language is not revolutionary, nor am I an anarchist. I am a poor fellow, without a farthing, whom nobody mistrusts. Being regarded as one of themselves, I hear everything that is said, for I am looked upon as a companion in poverty. Rest under no delusions, sir, the mind of the great public is of a detestable nature; the very men on whom you think you can rely—the workmen on whom you have lavished favours of every kind—are devoid of the slightest attachment or gratitude to you. All your benefits; merely electoral puffs. Your financial sacrifices; an insurance against revolution. Do you know what they call you, sir, in their meetings?"

"I suppose they call me M. Didelod, don't they?"

"No, sir; they have nicknamed you: 'Citizen Forty Millions,' or even just 'Forty Millions'!"

"For what reason?" stammered Didelod, in amazement.

"Because ten years ago, they allege, you inherited twenty million francs, which you have doubled by this time."

"Indeed!" said the mayor, with a faint smile. "Forty millions. What do they know about it?

Have they also made the calculation of what my father and myself have spent to make life easier for them?"

"That does not count; they are absolutely indifferent to it. All they see is what you have kept, that enormous pile of wealth which has hypnotised them, and on account of which they call you "Forty Millions"! With this capital, they say, they might constitute an effective supply of ready cash for the exploiting of mines and forges, made over into workmen's concerns. They would no longer need any master!"

"And what would they have done with the master?" exclaimed M. Didelod, exasperated beyond measure. "Robbed and plundered him, and then left him to die in a ditch? Or even forced him to work with his own workmen, to show them, gratuitously, the way to manage the business with his own capital, for the benefit of Collectivism? Well, Gaudin, see here, before I would be reduced to such a condition, they would have to kill me first."

In a state of violent excitement, M. Didelod paced up and down the room. For a short time his breath came in rapid gasps, but he quickly regained possession of himself and said calmly:

"Come, come, Gaudin, why are you inciting me with these hypotheses of yours, to a foolish digression from the matter in hand? You are dreaming, old fellow, and making me dream too. The situation may be a serious one, and your warnings shall receive the attention they deserve. In the meantime I must call and see M. Neumans."

CHAPTER II

THE CHATEAU AND "THE PINEAPPLE"

THE Château de Badonviller stood on rising ground, at a distance of about two miles from Lehrange. It was a large mansion, built in Louis XIII style, situated in the centre of a fine park of firs, beeches, and oaks. The plains around abounded with partridges and hares. The fact that the frontier was so near, however, made supervision difficult, and the four gamekeepers were continually on the alert. Didelod was fond of shooting, but his multifarious occupations prevented him from taking advantage of it as often as he would have liked to do. Three or four battues took place every autumn, bringing to Lehrange a number of Government Ministers and members, and some of the keenest sportsmen of Paris. Maurice Didelod was the only one who really took advantage of the fine sporting facilities of Badonviller.

He was a young man of twenty-five, passionately devoted to sport, though not at all to business, to the great despair of his father. Brought up, along with his sister Laurence, by a pious, aristocratic mother, Didelod's children had not adopted their father's advanced ideas; Maurice, with that lack of reverence so usual in the present generation, looked upon Didelod's humanitarian conceptions as sheer folly, nor did he scruple to ridicule them in his very

presence. He was a member of the three most reactionary clubs in Paris, until such time as he might be in a position to offer himself for membership at the "Jockey Club," which not everybody could enter. In important crises of his life of pleasure, he had adopted a phrase which always made his father indignant: "When you are President of the Republic, father." These important crises generally happened when M. Didelod, who was rather tight-fisted towards his son, refused him the money necessary to pay his debts.

Maurice accepted his father's admonitions in a spirit of philosophic calm, and waited till the storm had passed over. But when he found that it was lasting too long, he hastened forward the end with the clinching argument: "When you become President of the Republic, father, you will not let me be worried to death by tradespeople." The deputy for Lehrange flashed a look of anger at his son as he exclaimed: "Good heavens! how stupid the boy it! One of these days he will be saying that when visitors are present! And the day after it will be in all the papers!" "Then give me what I ask you for!" M. Didelod paid up. At the bottom he was proud of the fine young fellow who was so popular wherever he went. When one of Didelod's colleagues in the Chamber had asked him in pitying tones? "And your son? Does he do nothing? What a trouble it must be to you, who work so hard!" he replied almost brutally: "I only came after my father. My son came after me. There is a great difference!"

It was his daughter who held the larger place in his heart. In this simple, practical, active girl he rec-

ognised a second self, a pure Didelod. She had his blue eyes and light hair, his rather thick-set figure. When she was a child he called her his "little pony." At twenty, short though strongly built, she offered the greatest possible contrast to her tall, thin, dark-complexioned brother, both physically and morally. Very artistic in her tastes, Laurence showed genuine talent for sculpture and painting. She had quite a literary style in writing, the result being that her father, whenever he was at Badonviller, never failed to make use of her services if he had a speech to prepare or some important work to draw up. She understood him better than his secretary; better than the editor of the "Echo." He had one bitter cause for regret, however; his daughter did not share his ideas on social evolution, and regarded the theories which Didelod and his party upheld in the Chamber as Utopian, pure and simple. This was a never-ending source of dissension between father and daughter. With a smile on her lips, Laurence resolutely stood out against Didelod's enthusiastic rhapsodies on the beauty of a communistic regime.

Madame Didelod found little to attract her in Lehrange; when away from Paris she looked upon herself as an exile. In all other respects the most perfect harmony reigned amongst the members of the family, which was one of the best-known in Parisian society.

The Didelod mansion in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré had a splendid garden looking upon the Avenue Gabriel. It was here that Madame Didelod summoned her friends every spring to fêtes and receptions, an account of which furnished entertainment in the

society columns of the papers. Wealthy and highly respected, the Didelods had everything calculated to make them happy, and they felt happy; doubtless the surest way of being so. In her Lorraine prison, as she called her life at Badonviller, Madame Didelod had as neighbours the large landowners of the district, whilst the closest ties of friendship existed between her and the Berlier family. The Château de Fleurance, the residence of the Marquis and Marchioness de Berlier, was only a few hundred yards distant from Badonviller. The Marquis did not shoot, and Maxime, his son, a lieutenant of dragoons, was oftener with his regiment than at home. M. de Berlier's preserves were consequently at the disposal of M. Didelod. Game abounded in woods and fields, offering splendid opportunities for the sporting instincts of Maurice and his father's guests. The two families constantly saw one another, and, whenever politics were left out of the talk, got along very well together.

M. Didelod, by parliamentary influence, had obtained permission from the Minister of War to have the brigade of dragoons stationed in Lehrange exchanged for another brigade in garrison at Lille. Now Maxime de Berlier was in one of the regiments of this latter, so that, as it happened, the Marchioness had her son by her side during the whole summer season. It was Laurence Didelod who had brought about this change, for she had been brought up with Maxime de Berlier, her brother's friend in childhood. It was quite as much for her own sake as for that of the Marchioness that she had persuaded her father to ask that the two brigades should be exchanged. Didelod, delighted to be of service to Madame de

Berlier, would perhaps not have been so eager to obey his daughter had he suspected her secret motives for bringing nearer to Badonviller the regiment in which Maxime was serving as lieutenant. He had been the complete dupe of Laurence, who was once more practising the art of leading the member for Lehrange by the nose.

The very day on which M. Didelod, after his lunch, had rushed off so hurriedly to the Town Hall, to counteract the strike-producing tendencies of M. Tournemarie, about two o'clock in the afternoon, Laurence and Maxime were engaged in conversation as they paced up and down the beautiful garden separating the terrace of the Château de Badonviller from the thick growth of the park.

"I find your father quite changed from what he was last time he came here," said the officer.

"Quite changed? Do you mean towards yourself?"

"Yes. His feelings seem to be quite different from what they were. Last time I saw him he seemed to be fond of me; but now I would not swear that he has not taken a dislike to me. . . ."

"Has he said anything unpleasant to you?"

"No, indeed; he is polite and kind as usual. . . . And yet he is not as usual, for you feel that his pleasant behaviour is all on the surface, and that at bottom . . ."

"Don't look so deeply for the cause of the impression he has given you, or make a psychological problem of it. Thank Heaven, you are not a novelist!"

"No, I am a lieutenant of dragoons. . . .And I am

beginning to wonder if it is not my uniform that has been the cause of this sudden fall in his esteem. The army is anything but a popular institution in your father's mind. . . ."

"If such is the case, you must confess that he could easily find extenuating circumstances, for in whichever direction he turns, in this neighbourhood, he sees none but soldiers. At Lehrange is the 6th French corps, with its manœuvres of infantry and cavalry, without mentioning the artillery. At Steingel is the Saxon corps, with its squadrons and battalions, bridle and musket in hand, the van ever ready to cross the frontier. Really, unless you are a strict upholder of the military system, such a state of things is not calculated to induce a spirit of gaiety. As you are probably aware, father is in favour of disarmament, and is a member of the Peace Congress at the Hague. Consequently, the sight of a dragoon's uniform, in his own garden by the side of a pale silk dress which, he knows, encircles the form of his daughter, is bound to worry him to some extent. There is no reason to be unduly astonished at the fact."

"But what does the pale silk dress think of the dragoon's uniform?"

"Oh! the uniform is interesting enough to walk about with. That's something!"

"Does the wearer of the dress find any pleasure in it?"

"If she did not she would not be seen in its company."

Maxime de Berlier took his companion's hand in his own:

"Then you have not changed, at all events, Laurence? Do you still think as you did last January?"

"Yes, Maxime, just the same."

"And you advise me to be patient still and stay on here?"

"Stay on here? Were you thinking of leaving?"

"I must confess I was. Last night I thought the whole matter over very seriously, and made up my mind to have a serious talk with you. Had you not been so affirmative, I should have accepted an offer I have received, and gone out to Algeria."

"It would have given your mother great pain, had you decided to go."

"Indeed, it would; but it would have given me even more. You see, in the miserably uncertain position in which we soldiers find ourselves, a certain amount of moral consolation is absolutely necessary. Had we not that, we might just as well resign our commissions and return to civil life. Do you know what it means for a man of honour, who has sworn to serve his country with all his strength and mind, to discover that he is suspected by the very people who ought to be the first to cheer and encourage him? Yes, in the army we have come to such a stage that we feel ourselves abandoned by a Government whose defence we ensure. Everything they say to us has a false ring about it; all they do for us rouses nothing but distrust. If a member of the Cabinet comes to inspect our arsenals, fortresses, or barracks, we see from his very manner that his one and only object has been to try and catch us at fault. He comes up with inquisitorial air, seeming to say: 'Beware if I catch you napping!' And we are never to be

caught napping. We do what we have to do as skilfully and well as possible. This, however, does not prevent our feeling that these officials are secretly in collusion with the revolutionaries against whom we protect them, the result being that, when in a riot, with half-bricks hurled at us without our being permitted to retaliate, we have fanatics in front of us, who say: 'If these beastly soldiers were out of the way, we would overthrow the Government!' Behind us we have the Government muttering to itself: 'Ah! if we did not keep in check these brutes of soldiers, what a hash they would make of these poor rioters, who, when all is said and done, are our electors!'"

Mademoiselle Didelod shook her head:

"You exaggerate, though, after all, there is some truth in what you say. The paradoxical position in which you find yourself comes from the conflict between the tendencies of the present Government, the origin of which is revolutionary, and the necessities of power, which call for order. Now order is obtained only by force, that is to say, by the army. Hence we have inconsistency between actions and words. Words imply repression; actions imply complicity."

"How clearly you analyse the situation!" said Maxime, a smile playing about his mouth.

"Oh! I hear nothing else than this kind of talk from morning till night. It forms the occasion of eternal discussions between mother and father. Mother is a reactionary, whilst father is . . ."

She paused, and, with anything but a condescending gesture, continued:

"After all, what can one be with father's fortune and education and his determined intention not to leave the majority, in his desire to be a Cabinet Minister, and, after passing through other offices, end by being—as my brother says, whenever he wishes to obtain his own way with father—President of the Republic! . . ."

"That is something, after all!" remarked Maxime.

"Well, the race is open to all, you know. . . . The handicap is rather mixed, I must confess. . . ."

"Laurence, you fill me with despair," said the young man. "What can I, in my present position, expect from your family?"

"Don't trouble about that! Mother is on our side; so is Maurice. . . ."

"Yes, but then . . . your father? . . ."

"My father . . . is my government! Very well! I will question him, if necessary. In case he is able, he will give an explanation. Then if he asks for a vote of confidence, a decision will be taken, and he will lose!"

With a playful laugh she gave Maxime her hand, and said:

"Don't trouble yourself, but just do your duty in the army, and think only of becoming a captain. As for the rest, rely on me. . . ."

Together they returned to the château. From the terrace overlooking the Lehrange road, they saw rapidly approaching a carriage drawn by a pair of horses.

"What's the meaning of this? It is only two o'clock and father is returning. . . . There is some one

with him in the victoria. . . . It is M. Neumans. . . . There is something quite abnormal in this. . . . Let us go and meet them. . . ."

The two young people reached the court of honour and stopped on the top of the steps, whilst M. Didelod came down from the carriage and, with unusual haste, ran up, followed by Neumans. He scarcely looked at the young officer, to whom he held out his hand in absent-minded fashion, with a hurried "Good-afternoon, Maxime!" Turning to the furniture manufacturer, he said:

"Come along with me, M. Neumans, into my private room. . . ."

"Will you have something to drink, father?" asked Laurence.

"Order some beer to be sent up. It is a warm day, and M. Neumans and I have much to talk about. . . ."

Accompanied by M. Neumans, who was bowing most deferentially to Mademoiselle Didelod, the two proceeded through the vast hall, decorated with lofty hanging tapestry and furnished with stately Louis XIV arm-chairs, and entered the room.

"Now, M. Neumans, that we are quiet, let us just see how matters stand. I have seen Tournemarie."

"That is an advantage you have had over me. It is because I no longer saw him that I have been deprived of his collaboration."

"Perhaps you have acted rather hastily."

"It is all a matter of discipline; had I not made an example of this man, the turnover in my establishment would have gone down at once. The workmen

were watching me, and patience on my part would have been looked upon as a sign of weakness. I have a set of Parisians working for me, intelligent and clever, but ill disposed. Had I not stopped them from the outset, they would have soon become more powerful than myself in my own works. That I would not, and never will, tolerate."

"In my opinion, if you would consent to come to terms with Tournemarie, everything would speedily be settled."

"Perhaps, but only to begin again in a few months. Every advantage the workmen get they will regard as a reason for demanding something more. You are well aware what gigantic strides industry is making in this district, and how solicitous we are of the material comfort of the men. They forget all this, and think only of what new boon they can obtain. Those with whom we have to do have no idea of the meaning of the word gratitude."

"No, it is not that. They do not know the meaning of the word happiness."

"Happiness? I was a workmen, too, when I was young, so I am able to compare their condition with the one I had to be content with in the past. What a difference! Wages have doubled. . . ."

"But then, living expenses have increased. . . ."

"Yes, but not to the same extent; far from it, owing to the thrift establishments and savings banks you have founded. But, after all, that has nothing to do with the matter; the question of wages is not at issue. My workmen have no complaint to make on that score. It is simply in obedience to a password that they have gone on strike."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Absolutely certain. I assure you they have not all been glad to break off work, but have done so with deep regret, with the exception of a score of mischief-makers who are under Tournemarie's thumb. Those to whom I have spoken have said to me: 'We are very sorry, sir, but a sentiment of solidarity demands that we strike.' That is the reason they are out, you see, and the condition on which they will return to work is that I take back M. Tournemarie, who has seduced them all, and is now daring me to do my worst."

"Come, M. Neumans, you really must not get it into your head that these poor fellows are committing a crime in being determined not to leave their comrade to his fate. Their action is quite chivalrous! All the more so as the majority of them have not twenty francs in their pockets, and will certainly be on short commons before a week is past. . . ."

"No, such is not the case. The very night before they left work they received twelve hundred francs from the general strike fund. . . .It appears that considerable importance is being attached to the attempt made in Lehrange."

"In what respect? Do they not know that I am on the spot?"

The smile which spread over Neuman's face at this question brought a rush of blood to the countenance of M. Didelod.

"Yes," he continued forcibly, as he rose to his feet, "do they not know what an influence I have over the workmen of this district?"

"Up to the present, M. Didelod," meekly answered

the furniture-maker, "I have been the only one in question. . . ."

"What do you mean, up to the present?" repeated the mayor. "Do you really think it possible that the strike may spread? Are you aware, M. Neumans, that for thirty years there has not been a single attempt to abandon work in the canton of Lehrange!"

"Certainly I am, and also that your special circumstances which enable you to pass on your orders to the Steingel works, in case a strike takes place at Lehrange, would make it no easy matter for your men to leave work. All the same, I am under no illusions regarding the spirit of moderation, of goodwill or of gratitude, which may be expected from men to whom you and I supply the means of livelihood."

"The workmen are in no way indebted to us, M. Neumans," said Didelod drily. "They give us work in exchange for our money, and so we are quits. But this equality of position does not free us from the duties we contract towards the masses, for the very reason that we are their heads. We are under obligation to be wiser, more patient and generous than they are. This is what I now exhort you to do in the public interest, as well as your own. Hatred is an evil thing, M. Neumans; no opportunity should be afforded it to grow and increase. It is like a conflagration which, if it is to be kept in check, must be extinguished at once. Since you have right on your side, that is only an additional reason why you should make concessions."

"Such theories as you advocate are rather dangerous, I'm afraid."

"They are the very ones I should apply in a similar case."

"It would be very stupid, M. Didelod, to wish that you should have an opportunity of doing so, for a strike at your works would bring in its train the most terrible complications. But I should like to see how your ideas would work if you had to deal with revolutionists. Take my word for it, this movement has nothing to do with improving the conditions of the workers; its object is to gain a victory over a master. The manifestation is a political, not a corporate one. The men who act are of Lehrange, but those who give orders are in Paris."

"What! the Workers' Federation? I will get to the bottom of this, and that speedily, for I am in close relations with the whole of the union staff. Its leaders are my friends, my political colleagues."

"Well, M. Didelod, you will have an opportunity of changing your mind regarding them," said the furniture-maker coldly. "You will learn to know your friends. There can be nothing in common between these bold upstarts and yourself, for it is their object to deprive you of your seat in Parliament, your works and your fortune. If you think they will spare you, you are under a great delusion; they will make use of you in order to attain to power, then the first thing they will do will be to fleece you. It will be your turn before mine, M. Didelod, for I am of little account, whilst you are a powerful millionaire. The fact that you have banqueted and toasted with them will not induce them to make an exception in your favour. You are a capitalist; that is enough. And they look upon every capitalist, from the greatest to

the smallest, as a 'robber,' who will have to be made to disgorge. Do you really think that your friends the Collectivists will spare you? Come now, M. Didelod, I am very sorry to be obliged to speak in this way, but it is necessary. Rest assured, all the same, that I feel the greatest deference and the most sincere affection for you."

The member for Lehrange was at first utterly amazed at the audacity shown by the furniture-maker. Then a feeling of keen irritation came over him at having so sharp a judgment passed on him. The confident words of respect, however, with which the speech ended somewhat calmed him. Still, it was with no small degree of scorn in his voice that he replied:

"You do not understand, M. Neumans; the programmes of Socialist orators are only politics. Do not take these declarations literally; it is always possible to come to terms. Will you allow me to negotiate for you in this matter?"

"Willingly, M. Didelod, on one condition; that I be permitted to come to the final decision."

"Certainly. Now I will go and see the committee, since there is one. And I will keep you well informed as to the progress of the negotiations."

"Many thanks."

"Come, come, M. Neumans, don't have a fit of the blues. You must cultivate a little more optimism in your nature. The men are not altogether bad, I assure you. They are big children; you can make them do what you please. The thing is to know how to manage them. Just you see, I will show

you how to deal with such rudimentary minds as theirs. . . ."

He accompanied Neumans to the table. Foaming glasses of beer stood on a tray.

"To your health, M. Neumans . . . and to an end of all your troubles."

"Thank you, M. Didelod, and may you never have to share them!"

Whilst this interseting conversation was proceeding Tournemarie had returned to "The Pineapple," and was giving his companions an account of his interview with the mayor. Six men had assembled in a private bar, round a table covered with bottles and glasses. They spoke quietly, without raising their voices, as though discussing some business matter, rather than as rebels bitterly protesting against their wrongs. Considerable attention was given to the explanations offered by a man of about forty, well dressed, with some pretensions to elegance even. He was very dark-complexioned, with heavy moustache and deep-set eyes, giving him an evil look. His voice was well pitched, assuming, when in a state of excitement or animation, a certain disturbing harshness. Evidently he was possessed of oratorical gifts. Just now, however, his explanations were given in a familiar tone of voice:

"Didelod's presence here is certain to give our movement quite unusual importance. As you are well aware, the member for Lehrange is playing the Socialist game, and that with real conviction. Consequently, we may expect to see him interfere in this matter. If he does, he may prove a serious check, for one in his position will obtain from the Govern-

ment whatever aid he desires. I suppose there is no necessity for me to explain to you what that means."

"The police force and the military; repression of the strike by the usual methods."

"No; it is not that I am afraid of. Didelod will not break so openly with his past record. Before appealing to brute force, he will have to be impelled thereto by the serious turn events may take. . . . He has several other means, however, at his disposal; the whole of the administration is at his beck and call. There is not a functionary in the land, however insignificant he be, who has not depended upon Didelod either for his position itself or for promotion in it. From the electoral point of view, he is undisputed master here. Besides, his fortune is so vast that he can effect a great deal of bribery."

"Oh!"

"You need not protest; for you know quite well how readily the working classes are led by the nose . . . that's the whole of our business, in fact. Well! a man who can pay for drinks indefinitely is bound to win in a country or a district where men's brains are besotted with alcohol."

"But then, his promises will act as a check to his actions. In the Chamber he is on the side of the Socialists. . . ."

"Good! that's a matter dealing with parliamentary tactics. But just bring him into conflict with his immediate interests, and you will see what will happen. I defy you to quote an instance of a politician whose principles have not been scattered to the wind in a like case. They allege all kinds of extenuating circumstances compatible with the facts, they explain,

or comment, or compromise, and then, when a move has to be made, it is against the working classes."

"He told me just now that he did not know the working classes," declared Tournemarie with a roguish laugh.

"You see that! Well, he will have to make their acquaintance!"

Silence followed. The final threatening words, uttered by the man who was talking to Tournemarie and his companions, seemed to have brought the conversation to a close. After a brief interval, however, the glasses were filled once more and the cigarettes relit.

"Stylb," said Tournemarie, addressing for the first time by his name the man he had brought to the meeting, "before you leave you must see Grangel. Suppose you come along with me now to the school?"

"Very well. Good-bye for the present, comrades; I will see you again before long. I must return to Paris for fresh instructions, and I will soon be back to see how things are progressing."

They shook hands, and Stylb followed Tournemarie out of the inn. The street was deserted as the two men proceeded with hasty steps in the direction of the school, which stood at the entrance to a beautiful common, shaded with lime trees, by the river-side.

"Let us take this side street," said Tournemarie; "we will enter at the back, and so avoid attracting attention."

The two turned into a by-lane, lined with gardens. Over the hedges hung branches laden with fruit. One green hawthorn hedge was being used for drying napkins and linen which had been washed in the

neighbouring river. Tournemarie turned the handle of a door and entered, followed by his companion. Seated on a form along the wall of the small courtyard sat Grangel, smoking his pipe. He rose to his feet on seeing the two men enter, and held out his hand.

"M. Grangel," said Tournemarie, "I have brought our friend Stylb from Paris to see you. . . ."

"Very well!" remarked the schoolmaster, casting a rapid glance around. "Suppose we step into my room, where no prying eyes can see us. Here that Jesuit of a Gaudin might play the spy on us. I suppose you know that he is absolutely devoted to the mayor?"

"So things are not going well with Didelod?" asked Stylb as soon as they were seated.

Grangel smiled:

"How could you expect them to go well? With all his pretence of being a Socialist, he is as reactionary as the worst of them. How could it be otherwise? Here we have one man in possession of the share of twenty or thirty thousand men. Every year his works bring him in millions of francs, whilst his workmen have an average wage of five francs per day. Does he think we are so stupid as to believe in his professions of faith? Not only is he a sweater like the rest, he is a hypocrite into the bargain! He is more culpable than M. Neumans, Tournemarie, against whom you are in revolt. Neumans was himself a workman once; the position to which he has attained is one he has won for himself, by dint of labour and thrift. If private ownership were at all permissible, his would be. But think of Didelod's

fortune! On how great a sacrifice of blood and tears has that pile of gold been erected?"

Stylb made a vague gesture of wearisomeness as he said:

"Yes, yes, we know all that. In whatever way capital has been acquired, it must be abolished. That is the main thing. So that the solution of the problem may be possible, public opinion must be prepared. With this object in view, we must set to work in the schools and the barracks. What we want is a race of young men who will rise in revolt against the masters, and an army which will not oppose them. All else, for the time being, is of no importance. How far are you here?"

"The progress we are making is very slow. The frontier towns are hotbeds of Chauvinism, and the army is well held in check by the officers. As regards the working population, the advantages they receive from the institutions founded by Didelod render them disposed to become effeminate and indifferent. Here the people are too fortunate, it is no easy matter to make rebels of them."

"Philanthropy is the enemy of Socialism," said Stylb curtly. "Though charity boards are quite inadequate, all the same, we shall have to do away with them. Poor relief engenders resignation, and you can do nothing with those who will submit to anything."

"Still," remarked Tournemarie, "you would not wish for famine, in the interests of revolution!"

"Why not?" declared the schoolmaster savagely.

"No, no! Listen to me!" replied the cabinet-maker. "You, Grangel, are under the Government,

and have board, fire, light and food gratis. You run no risk whatever. But when we workmen go on strike we must be prepared to know what hunger means."

"One should be willing to suffer for the cause."

"I quite agree with you. But I have a wife and children. . . ."

"You will receive a subsidy," interrupted Stylb, who appeared to be irritated by the discussion between the two others. "In your capacity as delegate, Tournemarie, you will have your usual wages. . . ."

"Ah! that's all right! Hurrah for the strike!"

"As we have nothing further to discuss you had better go home, Tournemarie. I have a few words to say to Grangel. . . ."

The cabinet-maker shook hands with the two others, lit a cigarette, and, on reaching the door, said:

"I will await your instructions, M. Stylb, and obey them to the letter."

No sooner had he disappeared than the schoolmaster said bitterly, with a shrug of the shoulders:

"That's the type of men we have to deal with! And he's one of the best! Ah! the working classes are hard to convince!"

"That's not the question; you have not to convince, but rather to carry them away with you. Grangel, you look at everything from a pedagogue's standpoint. . . . No army knows anything of the cause for which it fights. We are leading the people on to revolution. All that is needed is that we, the leaders, know what we want; the rest have only to follow. . . ."

"And sing the 'Internationale,' smashing everything on the way," chuckled the schoolmaster.

"We must give the poor fellows a little distraction. . . . Besides, if they did no damage, how would they get the impression into their heads that there was anything changed in the condition of things?"

"Do you believe in a change in society, Stylb?"

"Not in the least. The rich will be ruined, but the poor will not be enriched. The only difference will be that we shall be at the head of things, and once we have the power, we will organise the proletariat."

"Will the masses be any happier?"

"Yes, if they will be content to have us as their masters."

"Suppose they do not?"

"In that case they will fling us down, and we shall have a dictatorship."

"Autocracy, in a word, however it be applied."

"Do you think that anarchy is anything else than a poet's fancy? A nation of forty million inhabitants cannot live without laws and regulations, without compulsion, in a word. Only an individual isolated from the rest of society could really believe in anarchy! No sooner are two human beings in presence of one another than one is fated to dominate the other. They will never be of the same mind on every question; the result will be that the very first discussion will give rise to the rule of the stronger and bolder of the two."

"Then shall we never know that harmonious state in which full liberty and equality shall reign?"

"Fénelon's 'Salente' or Cabet's 'Icaria,'" said Stylb, with a smile. "Mere romantic conceptions;

chivalrous aspirations! Do you regard it as possible to make humanity virtuous?"

"No," said the schoolmaster. "Philosophy will not succeed where religion has failed. The moral law, which is the laic dogma, is capable of appealing only to the minds of the few. Intelligence is no guarantee of morality; in fact, the more widely read a man is, the more corrupt he is. Materialism is a degrading doctrine, giving birth to selfishness, cowardice, and hypocrisy. A man without an ideal is fit only for the lowest tasks in life. How can the idea of sacrifice arise in a mind which believes in nothing beyond the present life? Robespierre well knew what he was doing when he imposed on the people the worship of the Supreme Being. If we Socialists had any common sense, after destroying the Church, a hindrance to us from a political point of view, we should take up with its ideas and apply them on our own account. Let us be the laic priests of a social religion, but do not let us leave the people without any ideal at all. They would sink into a besotted condition and we should be responsible for their vicious excesses. They must believe in some thing, otherwise they will believe in some one. And in the mind of the people that some one would be . . . Cæsar!"

"Assuredly these are momentous times; if we do not evolve in the direction of Socialism, we suffer shipwreck. And even evolution may bring ruin and disaster in its train. Are you against the army, Grangel?"

"Absolutely."

"Well, my dear fellow, were we without an army,

two results would follow. In the first place, we should have in our power the capitalist society, of which the army is the sole protection. But then, in the second place, we should fall into the hands of Germany, which would not fail to take advantage of our defenceless condition to invade us. You complain of middle-class tyranny and wish to break it, but what would you say of the Prussian yoke? The Teuton will use you brutally and you will regret the mildness of French rule. The hard-hearted Kaiser will reduce you to a state of slavery; you will toil and sweat to pay off the tremendous indemnity decreed by the foreigner. Then you will wish to drive out the invader and will appeal to those very soldiers to whom you preached the duty of internationalism. In reply, they will say that the Germans are our brothers, that it is you yourselves who have told them so. Beware of opposition to militarism, Grangel, if you would avoid invasion and slavery."

The schoolmaster looked coldly at Stylb and said in peremptory tones:

"Don't be afraid. The middle and upper classes will pay to set us free."

"Unless they come to an understanding with the enemy," jeered Stylb, "with the object of subjecting us to a worse slavery than ever."

The schoolmaster turned pale with rage:

"In that case we should be their dupes once more, I suppose?"

After a moment's reflection he continued:

"Do you think they would sink to such depths of infamy as to covenant with our foes?"

Stylb laughed aloud.

"You would have left them no other choice! If the capitalists are to be victimised, they would prefer to submit to the law of an organized established power than the changing and uncertain caprice of the proletariat."

"Ah! how well you know the people you govern!" said Grangel bitterly.

With an expression of mingled pride and menace, Stylb continued:

"My dear fellow, you should try not to be so stupid, and to understand that the efficacy of revolutionary methods is extremely limited. Our whole plan might be summed up in the popular adage, 'Out you come and I'll jump into your shoes!' This, between ourselves, is the situation we ought to recognise. All else is nonsense, with which the wind-bags in the Chamber may stuff their speeches. These latter, however, are only the trumpets and drums of the Socialist party; the music! But it is we who call the tune."

Grangel remained silent for a moment, his dreamy eyes looking upwards. Then in a dull voice he said:

"And are all our efforts to meet with so wretched a result! I had dreamt a more beautiful dream."

"Yes, you are a Utopist, full of plans for the reform of mankind! In 1789, when the middle classes fell upon the king and deposed the clergy and the nobles, did they seek anything else than power? Now it is our turn to snatch it from their hands, and that by means of a general strike. This would fill them with dread. Just cut off, for a single week, all possibility of a renewed supply of food by stopping the railroads; plunge them into darkness by cutting

off the gas and electricity, and you will see what a maddened Paris will do. . . . A maddened Paris would be capable of rising up against us and cutting us to pieces. . . ."

"Ah! Stylb, you are making a great mistake in trying to show me the folly of my hopes. I feel the need of believing in greater material prosperity, a better future for the people, the establishment of the cult of reason, the triumph of religion, if I am to do the work I have undertaken here. If I destroy the old beliefs in the minds of my pupils and replace them by new ideas, I must at all events feel convinced that they are sound and good. Otherwise, you see, I should be a common malefactor, a real poisoner of the public! A tradesman who ruins the stomach of a customer by adulterating his products is sent to prison. In my case, Stylb, it is the souls of children which are entrusted to my charge, you understand, simple, innocent souls which cannot defend themselves. Think what it would mean were I to corrupt them!"

Stylb laughed outright.

"You are a good fellow, Grangel, though rather too timid. Set your mind at rest and don't let the question trouble you any more. To come to business, how is the propaganda going along in the barracks?"

"No progress whatever. The officers have complete control over their men, and the proximity of the frontier acts in quite a special manner on the minds of the troops."

"What if trouble were to arise?"

"The soldiers would march without hesitation."

"What kind of an officer is the general in command?"

"A strict Republican, and a bachelor."

"And the two colonels?"

"One is the Marquis de Tonnereine, young and aristocratic, taking no interest in politics, whilst the other, M. Duval, is a born soldier. Both are married and have children. To tell you the truth, I care little for this sort of thing, but as you seek for information, I give it you."

"Because it is trustworthy."

"Possibly."

"Ah! Grangel, he who begins to discuss dogma will soon betray it. . . ."

"Would you not allow freedom of inquiry, Stylb?" asked the schoolmaster bitterly.

"Freedom of inquiry is a weapon you fling overboard as being dangerous once you attain to power. When you are the master you have nothing to do with inquiry."

"You are maintaining the doctrines of the Jacobins."

"There are no others for the man who is determined to succeed."

"Ah, then you start with Robespierre and finish with Napoleon! Take care!"

"We have nothing to fear. If a general would be popular he must win victories. But as we are in favour of peace, we shall not have war at all."

"Suppose we are attacked? Surely then we must defend ourselves?"

"The whole nation would rise in one body."

"Stylb, repeat fairy tales of that nature at your

public meetings, don't bring them here. If the whole nation were to rise—which would be more than doubtful—they would be swept out of existence, like so much dust. You can't repeat Valmy and Jemappes against a military power organised like that of Germany. You must have a regular army, comprising all the living forces of the country, and tempered by a discipline of iron. . . . Stylb, we are daily destroying this necessary force in order to assure the triumph of the revolution. It is wrong of you to afford me an opportunity of reflecting on these matters. . . . Either I must march blindly forward . . . or I shall come to a full stop. . . ."

"Come, come, how sensitive you are!" said the revolutionist, with a smile of mild pity. "Calm your scruples. I must now be off to Paris, to give the committee an account of my tour. Good-bye for the present; I shall be back as soon as the time for action comes."

CHAPTER III

THE BOMB

M. TOURNEMARIE was a regular tyrant at home. His wife and two daughters went out daily to sew or iron in the houses of the middle classes. The combined earnings of the three subjects of this absolute monarch amounted to an average of six francs per day. Whenever M. Tournemarie also felt inclined for work the family lived well enough, with the six francs he earned added to the rest. Madame Tournemarie was a little, thin, dark-complexioned woman, as hard-working as a horse. Gabrielle, the younger of her two daughters, was blonde and plump, like her father, and always laughing. Hortense was a tall, well-built girl of eighteen, with dark hair and blue eyes; she was possessed of all her mother's energy and tenacity, which she manifested in her many discussions with M. Tournemarie, whose theories and deeds she neither admired nor approved of. The revolutionist, bold enough in dealing with his wife and Gabrielle, was more cautious with Hortense. This sprightly beauty had an eloquent tongue and considerable piquancy in repartee, as well as utter scorn for Socialistic opinions, which she did not hesitate to qualify as "huge jokes." She was always very coquettishly and tastefully dressed, and wore a hat in the street, however modest might be her dress. All the money her mother allowed her

was spent in the purchase of elegant and stylish boots.

"Do you know, Hortense, what my mates said to me the other day?" said Tournemarie to his daughter.

"No, and I don't care to know."

"I will tell you, all the same; it will be to your interest. Well, then, they said that you dressed far too daintily for a mere working girl."

"You may tell them from me that they are a set of idiots!"

All the same, a blush had overspread her face and her rude reply was accompanied by a slight trembling of the voice. Tournemarie had grumbled, and, as he was wont to do when his daughter opposed him, set out for the inn to change the current of his thoughts. Gabrielle immediately crossed over to her sister, and, with a knowing look, said to her:

"You'd better be on your guard, for you were seen last night with some one as you left work about seven o'clock. . . ."

"What does all this mean?" questioned Hortense, with a stern look at her younger sister.

"That's the tale I was told, anyhow. I was even informed that the 'some one' with you was a lieutenant of dragoons in plain clothes, though he was recognised for all that. . . .So, you see, you had better pay attention. . . ."

Without a word of protest, Hortense shrugged her shoulders. She sat by the window and began to work in silence, awaiting the return of her mother. Three months previously Lieutenant Maubrun, of the 27th Dragoons, had been smitten with her beauty as he saw her pass along the street. When she left work she began to see the officer regularly, as though

by chance. He seemed to spring from the ground, just in time to meet her as she passed by. Every day for three months she saw him watching her from a respectful distance, without giving her a smile. She had noticed that the young man was well dressed and dark complexioned, with fair moustache and dark eyes. His general mien puzzled Hortense, who began to wonder what his profession might be. Perhaps he was a mining engineer at Lehrange, or in the sub-prefect's office. But then, he was too gentlemanly in bearing and elegance to be easily mistaken for a clerk, whilst an engineer seldom had so much leisure time on his hands. One day she found the key to the problem as she was passing, contrary to her wont, by the Chevart Square, taking samples to a customer. A group of officers, smoking cigarettes, was standing in front of the barracks of the 27th regiment. As she passed carelessly along one of the officers remarked:

"What a fine girl! Just look, Maubrun!"

Instinctively Hortense raised her eyes, and, in no small perturbation of mind, recognised the person addressed as being her wooer. He was in uniform, which showed off his graceful figure to considerable advantage. With a faint blush she bent her head and walked away, though not so rapidly as not to hear the first officer reply:

"Ah! does she know you, Maubrun? I imagined I saw her blush when she looked at you just now!"

Lieutenant Maubrun answered:

"No, no, my dear fellow; it was your compliment which embarrassed her. I don't know her at all."

The following day, on returning home as usual, she met Lieutenant Maubrun. He did not seem disposed to take advantage of the incident of the previous evening to claim the young girl's acquaintance, but merely looked at her more attentively, and it was Hortense who could not refrain from a slight smile. It happened that she was helping the wife of a captain of the 27th, so she took advantage of the few moments during which the orderly was clearing away in the dining-room to ask a few questions. Hortense discovered that Maubrun was a viscount, though anything but conceited, very strict in his military duties, though kind to the men, a first-rate horseman, who had won numerous prizes at races, and altogether a credit to the service.

Through frequent meetings the young people had become so accustomed to each other that, one day, Hortense not finding the lieutenant at the place where he was wont to pay her the compliment of his mute escort, she lingered behind until she saw him appear, quite out of breath with running. She looked both anxious and vexed to such a degree that Maubrun found courage to stammer out a few words of excuse. Without thinking there was anything wrong in such an action, she listened to him, and the conversation proved so pleasant that she was a quarter of an hour late in returning home. For the future it was unnecessary to follow Hortense, who would leave her work a little earlier under the pretence of pressing duties at home.

Her sister's warning words were calculated to trouble her peace of mind considerably. If the matter came to the hearing of her mother she would be

anything but pleased; whilst the bitter animosity of her father would be intolerable. In his eyes it would be treason for his daughter to love a man belonging to another class of society than his own.

Hortense had no fear for herself, though she was very anxious concerning Maubrun. After drinking a few glasses, her father was quite capable of waiting for the lieutenant in some corner and striking him from behind. To avenge his daughter's fair name would be a fine subject to declaim upon; one calculated to please him greatly. After all, with such an excuse, what risk did he run if he were to knock an officer on the head? The jury would acquit him and the Socialist journals would praise him to the skies.

The lieutenant lived in a small house in the Rue des Potagers, surrounded by a garden planted with a thick grove of trees. Beneath an arbour, entwined with honeysuckle, Maubrun and Hortense loved to sit at the fall of the day, whispering sweet confidences to each other. They never spoke of any but themselves. Not once had Hortense alluded to her family, the opinions of her father, or her fears of what he might do. Had Maubrun been an orphan he could not have said less regarding his people. The first time this rule of neutrality was broken Hortense was the innocent culprit. The lieutenant had just been speaking, in anxious tones, of the strike which had thrown all the cabinet-makers out of work, and had expressed the desire that things would not go worse. The young girl had impetuously exclaimed:

"I hope your regiment will not be obliged to interfere. If it did, I should indeed be in a fine position."

Maubrun gave her a questioning glance. She blushed vividly as she continued:

"I should have to choose between my father and you—a pleasing prospect!"

The lieutenant asked:

"Is your father on strike?"

"Yes, he is a foreman working for M. Neumans."

She did not dare to add that it was her father who was the cause of all that was happening, for fear of doing herself harm in Maubrun's mind. The latter, however, was thinking of something else, for he immediately asked:

"Since I do not know your father, have you a portrait of him that you could show me? It might be a good thing if I were able to recognize him in a crowd; one never knows what might happen."

"Yes, I have a good photograph which I will bring you."

It was in this fashion that the viscount made the acquaintance of M. Tournemarie. An opportunity of hearing him spoken of soon presented itself. Every morning, when not on duty, the lieutenant went for a ride with his friend De Berlier, and the two were often joined by Maurice Didelod. They were excellent horsemen, and would take long rounds through the woods, returning in time for lunch. Usually when Maurice Didelod accompanied them, instead of proceeding along the valley of the Verveille, they would pass by the top of the plain and drop their companion at the gate of Badonviller. On this occasion, as they were taking their usual route, Maurice said:

"Let us go by the valley. If you have no objection, I will lunch with you at Lehrange. . . ."

"Certainly," said Maubrun. "So you are giving up taking your meals at home?"

"Yes, for the present. Since the beginning of the week things have really been too bad. . . ."

"What is the matter?"

"Father can talk about nothing but the strike. He is head over ears in difficulties with the men out of work, so he is in the most villainous temper imaginable. . . . To tell the truth, I must have something else than politics to think about."

"Is it not yet settled?" asked Maubrun carelessly.

"Not at all. There is a sly fellow, named Tournemarie, a member of the union, who can twist the workmen round his thumb, so to speak, and, in my opinion, do what he pleases with the governor as well."

"What kind of a man is this Tournemarie?" asked Maubrun after a few moments' silence.

"Oh! he is an intelligent fellow, and clever enough at his trade, though spoiled by this Utopia of Socialism. . . ."

"Come, come, I say, Maurice, you seem to have little respect for your father's opinions. . . ."

"Oh, my father is A 1 in business matters, nor could you find any one more pleasant to live with. But in his capacity as deputy there is no doing anything with him. . . ."

"Indeed!"

"I, you know, am a thorough Conservative in my ideas. Mother is a Royalist, whilst my sister wor-

ships Doucet. . . . No salvation apart from fine dresses and beautiful costumes! . . . You may just think how all this fits in with the ideas of father, who is as rigid and uncompromising as Jaurès himself! He causes us a considerable amount of uneasiness. To think that such a man as he is, with his fortune and social position, should be hand and glove with all the spouters and brawlers in the Chamber! I tell you it's enough to make one sick! I just tell him what I think of the whole thing, and you know what this is. The effect is prompt and father turns even redder than his opinions. The result is that, as I do not care to become a parricide by bringing on him an apoplectic fit, I prefer to lunch with you rather than return home."

At this point Lieutenant Maubrun changed the conversation:

"Do you look upon this man Tournemarie, who seems to be at the head of the whole trouble, as capable of having recourse to violence?"

"My dear fellow, if Tournemarie were left to himself, it is very improbable that he would do anything serious; the danger is that he will obey orders coming from Paris. There, as you are aware, it is the revolutionary party which is at the head of affairs. If the leaders decide to bring about a struggle the workmen will obey them. I hear that Persin and Beaumont, the professional strike-makers, are coming. Stylb was here a few days ago, and he is to return. At present I can say nothing definite. Just think what father would do if the workmen of Lehrange were to come out on strike!"

"That's quite impossible!"

"Why impossible? Are you relying on the men's devotion and gratitude for the benefits they have received? My father and grandfather have been the organisers . . . benefactors, if you like . . . of the working population here. True, but have they given each workman a fortune? The latter have given their toil and labour, the former their money. There has been an exchange of work for wages, nothing more. For sixty years the smiths and foundrymen of Lehrange have lived on their earnings, which have been continually increased, in proportion as the hours of work have diminished. At the same time, however, the Didelods were piling up a huge fortune. I quite admit that no equality can fairly be established betwen the power that controls and finds the capital and the force that performs the work, and that the former is more important than the latter: It is none the less certain that each side produced what they had to do: the one energy, the other intelligence and money. After this, would you appeal to sentiments of generosity or kindness on the part of the workmen? They would laugh in your face. The settling of wages is a business matter. Sentiment has nothing to do with it; father will pay as little as possible and the workmen will try to obtain as much as they can. Such are the normal relations between the two. But let some eloquent speaker come to Lehrange and hold forth on social independence, increased comfort for the people, and the union of the working classes. Do you think no one will listen to him? If so, I should feel inclined to laugh at you. M. Didelod would speak in his turn, pleading the claims of economic necessity, foreign competition, the law of sup-

ply and demand, and all that. It would have not the slightest effect. The Lehrange works would be empty in a twinkling, and all father's Socialism would fall flat, to his utter stupefaction and dismay."

"Does M. Didelod not believe in strikes?"

"Father is a man who dreams even when awake! He goes straight ahead, hypnotised by the ambition of becoming a member of the Cabinet. He looks upon this as his due, and feels convinced that, once he is Minister of Finance or of Public Works, society will be saved. I assure you it is quite touching. And then, if only you knew what it all costs him!"

"Is he exploited by his political friends?"

"Don't mention it. That is a trifling matter, for he is quite justified in spending as he pleases the money he makes. But he does this with the sole object of keeping in the vanguard of the majority and maintaining his hopes of being a Minister. I have known father to be an opportunist before he turned Radical and Socialist. The separation of Church and State was not enough for him, he even voted in favour of the closing of the churches. Just think of it! At that mother and Laurence were really angry, and a terrible uproar was the consequence. And yet in truth, he does not believe in the very things for which he votes. The curé of Lehrange, a very decent man, receives money from father for the poor of the parish. Whenever military music is playing at the head of a regiment as it marches along M. Didelod is stirred with emotion, just like any ordinary patriot. All the same, when the day comes on which Mademoiselle Laurence Didelod declares her determination to marry Lieutenant de Berlier you

will listen to some fine music . . . which will be anything but military!"

"But then, you, Maurice," said Maxime smilingly, "I hope you will be on my side."

"My dear fellow, you will have the whole family on your side, except the head of it. And you may rest assured that in his heart he will approve of my sister's choice, and that if he does not confirm it on the spot, it will be entirely by reason of these deplorable political considerations I have been expounding to you. Here we are at Lehrange, and I am quite ready for lunch."

Bringing their horses to a trot, they entered the town. No sooner had they reached the first outlying houses than something unusual seemed to be taking place. Shopkeepers were at their doors looking down the street, listening attentively. The rattle of the horses' hoofs on the stones prevented the three companions from hearing any sound in the distance. As they passed along the bridge over the Verveille, however, they saw in the main thoroughfare a crowd of people, in excited groups, close to the Town Hall. Hurrying up, they reached the outskirts of the crowd, which parted to allow them to pass. Looks of hostility and ill-will were on their faces. The shouts now grew more distinct, and there appeared in view a crowd of about three hundred people, wildly gesticulating. The exclamations became quite audible. Neumans' workmen, surrounded by all the loafers in the town, had met together and were shouting out at the top of their voices: "Down with Neumans! Down with Didelod!"

Maurice and his friends reined in their horses.

The former has turned pale as he saw what was happening. Turning coolly round to the two others, he said:

"'My father may be inside; I will go to him. You had better go back and take my horse with you."

"All right, my dear fellow, but . . ."

"Don't be afraid on my account. Just clear away, and don't run the risk of compromising yourselves in this crowd. You are known to most of them. . . . Now go!"

Dismounting, he placed the bridle in Maxime's hand, and with a resounding smack on his horse's quarter, took leave of his friends. He hurried to the Town Hall. Louder and louder grew the tumult and the shouts of "Down with Didelod!" but he appeared to pay no heed to them. In the entrance hall stood an orderly, red and excited, his *képi* on the back of his head, and his big military moustache bristling. As he saw the mayor's son enter he exclaimed

"Well, Monsieur Maurice, this is a fine state of things!"

"Is my father upstairs?" interjected the young man, wishing to put an end to the old fellow's remarks.

"Yes, he is with M. Gaudin. . . ."

Maurice was already on the stairs, and, without waiting to knock at the door, had entered the mayor's parlour. M. Didelod was seated at his desk, talking with M. Neumans; Gaudin was at the window, looking out at what was taking place in the square.

"What! you here?" asked the member for Lehrange, a discontented look on his face as he saw

his son come into the room. "What do you want, Maurice?"

"As I was passing along I saw a crowd assembled and heard people shouting. . . . You cannot think I could listen to cries of 'Down with Didelod!' without wanting to know what was going on!"

"I am in no danger. Besides, it is 'Down with Neumans!' that they are shouting for the most part."

"If you hear no one but Neumans shouted down, then you are listening with only one ear. . . . I assure you your name is to be heard quite as frequently as M. Neumans.' There are about three hundred good-for-nothings out there, making enough noise for a thousand!"

"Quite right! Three hundred good-for-nothings! The real workmen, you see, have nothing to do with idiots like these!"

"But the cabinet-makers are all there, in the square," hinted Neumans, "and they are all real workmen. . . . As for the rest . . ."

"'A set of youths and lads! Not a single elector amongst them!"

At this moment a louder cry rose from the crowd, and the gesticulations became more violent than ever. Then, in imperious, aggressive tones, came the mayor's name, several times repeated:

"Didelod! Didelod! Didelod!"

"They are calling me," said the mayor in resolute tones. "Very well, I will speak to them."

Walking rapidly to the window, he flung it open. A shout of surprise rose from every part of the square, and inquisitive spectators came from the neighbouring houses to see what was about to take

place. Standing in front of the window, at his feet the flag which hung above the door, M. Didelod looked down on the crowd and raised his arm in a commanding attitude. Suddenly silence fell, and the sharp, clear tones of the mayor's voice could be heard all over the square:

"Citizens! I have too long been accustomed to take you into my confidence for me to hesitate now to place myself in direct communication with you. Not a single person here is ignorant of the fact that the service of the people has ever been my constant preoccupation, that I have always looked upon their interests as sacred, the defence of which is the only privilege I claim. In affirming that I am your equal as regards the exercise of my rights, I am quite willing to assume a far greater share of the claims of duty with regard to you. . . ."

After these introductory words he stopped a moment for breath. A murmur of approval was already beginning to make itself felt in the crowd, when a bantering voice uttered the single word:

"Humbug!"

The interrupter, doubtless, was possessed of no inconsiderable influence over the crowd, for a loud, coarse laugh was raised, followed by a volley of hisses.

"Citizens!" continued Didelod, undismayed, "I have devoted myself, you are well aware, to the satisfaction of your just demands. No matter what the circumstances, you have found me ready to back you up. Repay me by your moderation now. Let me quietly discuss your interests with you! I will bring them to a successful issue. . . ."

"As he always does! . . . Neumans is there with him!" interrupted the same voice.

"They are leagued against us! Down with Neumans! Down with Didelod!"

The howling crowd drew nearer, raising their arms threateningly. M. Didelod wished to resume his speech ,but it was quite impossible to make himself heard. He shouted out: "Citizens! it is one of yourselves who is speaking to you! . . . I am your friend! . . . Can you not trust me? . . ." The noise grew louder and louder, completely drowning his voice, whilst insulting epithets were hurled at him from every part of the square. Finally, his patience exhausted, Didelod, certain that he would not be heard, exclaimed: "What a pack of idiots;" and, returning into the room, suddenly closed the window. This was the end of the scene; the people broke into insulting jests, and soon marched off in a body singing the "Internationale."

To be caught in a most unpopular situation was the very thing calculated to displease Didelod more than any other. He said to his son:

"I am very angry with you for coming here!"

"I was merely passing along," said Maurice, "when I saw a number of people in the square and heard an uproar. I was afraid you might be in danger, so I came up."

"In danger? At whose hands?"

"At the hands of these brawlers below."

"They are harmless enough, just playing at demonstrating. There is no ill-will in what they are doing."

"There is no cordiality either."

"We will bring them back to their senses, though without treating them harshly."

"I hope they will show themselves equally considerate!"

"I have given orders that the military shall not put in an appearance, and telephoned to the superintendent of police not to show himself. We must arrange things between ourselves.

"Certainly. But then, both sides must be agreeable. And if you are alone . . ."

"You must be patient! . . . Workmen are mere children, whose ideas and opinions are continually changing from one thing to another. The main thing is not to appear to contradict them; if you do that, you can always manage them."

"Oh, I do not hold with violence. All the same, you must not be too gentle, unless you wish to be regarded as weak and lacking in firmness."

"My dear boy, I know how to treat workmen, considering the time I have had to deal with them. . . ."

"The fact is a great change has come over them the past few years."

"The times have changed also. Democracy has now gained the upper hand. We must make excuse for a certain degree of ardour in people who have not been accustomed to carry out their will. . . ."

"I have no objection to their carrying out their will! But what right have they to prevent others from doing the same? If you do not happen to be of their way of thinking they at once show their fists. I am greatly afraid your triumphant democracy will quickly become an instrument of tyranny."

"The masses will take their education into their own hands."

With a wave of the hand the member for Lehrange brought the conversation to a close. He hated to discuss politics with his son. In controversy it seemed to him that his paternal authority could not manifest itself. M. Neumans and Gaudin had witnessed the scene which has just taken place beneath their very eyes with different feelings. Gaudin, sincerely indignant at the insolence of the rioters, kept brushing back his long black hair. Neumans, rather pleased at bottom to see M. Didelod as badly treated as himself, had some difficulty in keeping back a smile as he looked up at the ceiling.

"They will calm down, M. Neumans," declared the mayor. "Just now they are spending all their fury; but to-morrow . . ."

"To-morrow," said Neumans, "you will witness the arrival of the envoys of the revolutionary party, and . . . the dance will soon begin. . . . I have my information at first hand, for several of my workmen are really devoted to me and have gone on strike against their will. They would be knocked about unmercifully did they not follow the rest. It is Tournemarie who is the leader to-day, but to-morrow he will be a mere unit like the others. The man who will assume the head of the movement is Stylb, the famous Stylb, who came from Paris the day before yesterday to see how the land lies and give his orders."

"I am not afraid of Stylb. . . . He is a friend of mine."

Maurice started, and Gaudin could not refrain from an exclamation of surprise.

"I have often spoken on the same platform at Socialist meetings, and had an opportunity to give him advice on several occasions. He is an intelligent fellow and will not care to come into collision with me in my own district. Stylb? Really, I am delighted at the idea of Stylb being sent here. Quite a happy chance!"

"Well! you may prepare yourself for your stroke of good fortune!"

The entrances to the square were by this time cleared of the throng; the workmen had left, and the various inns of the town shared among themselves the popular effervescence. M. Didelod sat down again at his desk, and with a benevolent look at Neumans said:

"Before we part, M. Neumans, I should like to ask what effect the strike is likely to have on your credit? A long experience has taught me that bankers do not hesitate to profit by the difficult situation in which a business man sometimes finds himself, by doing their best to ruin him. If you need any money to stand the strain I am quite at your disposal."

"Thank you, M. Didelod," said the othe in trembling accents. "I expected nothing less of you. I do not need any help, however, for I am a very unpretentious man, thank Heaven, and have something in reserve. I shall suffer less from this crisis than will my workmen. It is on behalf of those good people who are on strike against their will that I am troubled. I shall come out of it with nothing more than pecuniary loss, but think of the desperate state

they will be in if they remain long out of work. The worst thing about a strike as carried on in our country is the violation of personal liberty. I shall never accustom myself to the idea that it is just and right for a majority of good-for-nothings to impose their will on a minority of workers. Besides, what can one say when this is done by violent methods? Whatever your Socialist party may say or do, they will never justify the existence of obstacles to the liberty of earning one's own livelihood. Such a thing is monstrous! So also is regulation of the weekly rest? Oh! I am aware there is a law on the matter, but it is not every law that is good. This one in question is both stupid and tyrannical. What right has any one to prevent me from working on Sundays if I please? I remember how my grandfather used to complain that, during the old system, on fête and procession days the shops had to be shut, the houses decked with flags, and the people to fold their arms in idleness. Under the pretext of democratic progress, are the old Jesuitical tortures to be resumed? Come, come, M. Didelod, it would not be a good thing to have the State interfering with and regulating everything, wholly taking the place of the individual. That would be equivalent to reducing the people to the condition of slaves. We have not gone through four revolutions and abolished three monarchial governments to find ourselves enjoying less liberty under the rule of the Republicans."

M. Didelod rose to his feet, and, in commiserating tones, replied:

"You are displeased, M. Neumans, and certainly you have every reason to deplore your personal trou-

bles. Still, that is no reason for slighting the admirable work that democracy has accomplished. Do not me unjust; the proletariat had to become emancipated, and that could be done only to the detriment of the masters' omnipotence. I have to submit, as well as yourself, to the consequences of the reforms that have been accomplished; for the sake of my fellow-men, I accept them. There ought to be absolute equality between the producers of manual labour and the possessors of the capital which pays for it. It is this we are striving after with all our might. There are bound to be a few initial difficulties and a certain amount of disturbance. Once the balance is established, however, you will see how harmoniously the work will proceed. In place of strife and jealousy we shall have a feeling of noble brotherhood and true unity!"

Neumans shook his head.

"I am aware that this is your new gospel. Those to whom you preach it, however, will accept your sacrifices and my own without giving anything in return. The more you satisfy them, the more will they claim from you. So long as they have not laid hold of your money, your works, and your château they will not regard the social problem as solved. You, M. Didelod, will lose more than I shall, for I was once a working man myself, you see, whilst you are the son and grandson of masters. You have never worked with your own hands; you can only order others to do their work. How would you like to be made to obey? Can you imagine Stylb in your office at Lehrange, seated in your arm-chair, and managing the business in your place? Do not protest; I tell

you it is solely to fling you to the ground from your lofty position that a social reform is being effected. If such is not the case, will you have the goodness to tell me what it all means? Surely you do not imagine that because you are 'hail, fellow, well met' with the Collectivists they will treat you better than the rest! I imagine I aready hear the workmen in the district saying to one another, without the slightest scruples: 'M. Didelod is a Socialist, is he? Is he in favour of equality? If so, why should he not immediately set the example and give up his millions of francs to the proletariat, after converting his works into co-operative concerns? A place will be found for him in the office, since he never learned how to handle tools. With his ideas, such a huge fortune must be very inconvenient to him, for it is the fruits of robbery and fraud, since all masters are robbers! Let him make restitution!'"

"Fools!" exclaimed M. Didelod, turning very red. "How ignorant they must be if they understand nothing of the necessities of industrial life. There must be management and control in every business.

"So there would be. The only difference is that it would not be yours. The whole of the Socialist doctrine may be summed up in the one sentence: 'My turn now to have my bread buttered!'"

"What a reactionist's argument!"

"Don't you agree with me? Well, we shall see what the future has in store for you. At all events, M. Didelod, there is no equality anywhere throughout nature, and, I promise you, men will find no small difficulty in introducing it into society. You cannot

prevent there being some people who are intelligent and others stupid, some men in good, others in bad health, so that, at the very basis of humanity, we find differences of physical condition which destroy the economy of the system. The condition of things is even more striking from a moral point of view; you have the industrious and the idle; the miserly and the prodigal; the sober and the intemperate. Here your precious equality disappears farther and farther into the distance! Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that in this new-made society of yours the worker and the idler are paid the same wages; a most intolerable injustice, by the way! You cannot prevent the miser from hoarding up his money, whilst the prodigal will fling his earnings into the gutter. The sober man will be economical, whilst the drunkard will swallow every farthing he can lay hands upon. In a single day the social equilibrium will be disturbed, and a new capitalist will be created along with a new worker; consequently, master and servant, millowner and hand. Every year, every month, nay, every week, shall we begin again to despoil those who have saved a little capital, in order to favour once more those who have lived in a foolish, prodigal fashion? Such a state of things would be impossible, for you would, by these methods, have instituted a new kind of slavery in which you would have the best continually working for the worst. Ah! this dream of Collectivism is one of the most astonishing aberrations of the human mind. Philosophers may argue, political economists may write, and reasonings of every kind may be brought forward; it will all be of no avail, for equality cannot possibly exist on earth."

"Do you think the laws of men have anything to do with nature?" replied M. Didelod, in petulant mood. "No, they are made expressly for the purpose of reforming society, and are so many barriers set up against instinct. Of course, considering the centuries during which private property has been in force, it will not be modified without a certain amount of difficulty. But then, there are drawbacks implied in every kind of change; the main thing is to keep our eyes fixed on the result. If to the benefit of mankind, then it must be put into practice, however inconvenient it be. Red tape and routine always bring forward the same arguments. I agree that there are inequalities in nature, but the mass of mankind, after all, form a tolerably uniform whole. Is it for the exceptions or for the bulk of the people that you are working? If in a certain set of men you find one of them lame, are you going to prevent all such as are active and brisk from using their limbs to run about? Take another instance. Suppose a person of superior intellect is hurt in some way by the common rule set up for such as are of average intelligence, must the level be changed and the rules abolished? No, M. Neumans, progress will not be ineffective or fruitless if it works in accordance with an ideal of brotherly generosity. The bond of unity must be shown and the several members of the human family must learn to help and to love one another. . . ."

Just as M. Didelod, working himself up into a state of enthusiasm and with eyes directed towards the ceiling, as though he had caught a vision of this ideal society of the future, was making this stirring

appeal to human sympathy and affection, a formidable explosion was heard below the mayor's parlour, bringing the speech to a sudden stop, whilst the terrified listeners sprang to their feet.

"What is that?" exclaimed M. Neumans.

"An attack!" hazarded Gaudin.

"The villains!" said Maurice.

The door opened and a pungent smell of powder, accompanied by clouds of dust, entered the room. The orderly, a look of terror on his face, ran up to the mayor and stammered out:

"A bomb! . . . A bomb has burst in the hall! . . . They tried to blow up the whole building! . . . Ah! I heard the pieces hiss past my ears. . . ."

"Now! M. Didelod," exclaimed Neumans triumphantly, "there's fraternity for you! And you would show yourself kind and generous to such fanatics as these!"

"Not another word, M. Neumans," said Didelod, who had already recovered his sang-froid. "We must not accuse until we are sure. First let us go and see what it is all about."

Following the orderly, the three men left the room and descended the stairs.

CHAPTER IV

LOVE AND POLICY

IN the large *salon* at Badonviller there were several people present. It was nine o'clock in the evening. The De Berliers, including father and mother, Maxime and his two sisters, had been dining with the Didelods. The sub-prefect, the attorney for the Republic, and M. Jules Reismann, director of the Steingel works and member of the Reichstag, and a few others were chatting together in groups. Maxime and Maurice, with their sisters, had taken refuge in one corner of the room. Quietly standing behind the grand piano, apart from their sober-minded elders, they were making up for the slow, tedious dinner which they had just sat through, and where the talk had been altogether on the subjects of finance or politics. It was the evening of the very day on which the workmen's manifestation had been crowned by the formidable explosion of a bomb. The young people were eagerly discussing the affair:

"Were you not afraid, Maurice" asked Maxime's sister, Amélie, a pretty, fresh-looking girl of fifteen, with dark, laughing eyes.

"There was no time to be afraid," said young Didelod. "As soon as the explosion happened I saw that there was no one injured, for that imbecile of an usher, Sacré himself, came walking into father's room, unhurt and hatless. . . . All the same, it

cannot be denied that the intention was anything but a good one and that a crime had been resolved on. . . ."

"In spite of what M. Didelod says," interjected Caroline, the elder sister.

"Oh!" declared Laurence, "papa will never acknowledge that anything is right which is contrary to his opinions. It does not suit him at all to think that an anarchist outrage has been committed at the Lehrange Town Hall and against himself; consequently, he will not bate an inch, but declares to the sub-prefect and everybody else that the whole affair is nothing worse than a schoolboy's prank."

"How delightful!" added Maurice. "Well, I saw the bomb, so I know what to make of it. It was a large box that had been used for preserved tunny, full of chlorated powder, dynamite, shoe-nails, and surrounded with very tight wire. The effect was glorious, I can tell you. The hall-porter's door was reduced to dust, all the furniture ruined, the hall ceiling competely riddled, and the stair-rail torn away to a distance of over ten yards. Not a single unbroken pane of glass in the building! It was only by a lucky chance that the joists of the second floor did not fall in on to the ground floor; the hall door overlooking the garden was open, so the greater part of the expansive force of the gas passed away through that exit. Had the hall been closed, in all probability the second floor would have been blown up, and Neumans, father, Gaudin, and myself would have descended in small pieces."

"Oh!" was the indignant exclamation that came from the others.

At the same time, the voice of M. Teinturier, the *procureur*, could be heard breaking the silence in the other part of the *salon:*

"An inquiry must be issued against some person unknown. We shall certainly succeed in finding out who is guilty."

"No! No!" replied M. Didelod. "I don't want this affair to get abroad. I have wired to the Keeper of the Seals and the President of the Board of Works. It would prove a most disgraceful example if such an assault could be thought to have been instituted against one of the best-known representatives of the proletariat. Do nothing whatever until we hear from the Minister. I will see that the material damage is repaired; fortunately, there has been no loss of life. In the interests of public order we had better say nothing more about the matter."

"Your conduct is most heroic, sir," said the president of the court, who was hoping that Didelod would appoint him to a post as judge in a Paris court.

"It is most absurd!" declared M. Jules Reismann calmly. "You are merely encouraging the mob, which, the first opportunity it finds, will not scruple to trample you under foot. If such a thing were to take place where I live, both the military and the civil authorities would speedily set matters right, and you would soon see how effective is a Government with real authority behind it."

"Brute force!" remarked Didelod. "In France we have different opinions from Germany in such matters."

"Some day you will find out what it will cost you."

"A country is powerless," said M. de Berlier, "where no order is maintained. That is the basis of everything. My dear Didelod, I am well aware that we who love peace and order are the subjects of your ridicule and scorn. We are reactionists, and I can tell you the time will soon come when you, too, will be forced to join us. Once order has disappeared you will see what will become of society. For the present, we are living on the reserves of discipline which have accumulated in the mind of the public. The stock is getting exhausted, however, and some fine morning we shall awake to find the country in a state of anarchy. Then we shall have to make up our minds to use force to put down the revolutionists. You know what force is, don't you? Socially speaking, it is represented by the law, which obtains respect in two ways: the courts and the army. When you have become acquainted with bayonets and scales, my dear sir, you will be forced to confess that magistrates and soldiers, the scum of the human race as you may think them, have some good points, all the same, if they are capable of saving the situation."

"Yes, I know quite well," said M. Didelod bitterly, "that a great many people in France are placing their hopes on the passionate ardour of the democracy. We shall succeed in calming them, however, and the upheavals on which you rely to favour the coming of a dictator will not take place. Evolution, not revolution, is our watchword."

"Are bombs the instruments of evolution or of revolution?"

"The isolated act of a madman is not sufficient to compromise a whole party."

"Well, what of all those who, only a few hours ago, were shouting out: 'Down with Neumans!' Were they isolated individuals?"

"They were displeased with M. Neumans."

"Then what of M. Didelod, their friend and brother, staff and support, did they not howl him down, too? What had he done to them?"

"Ah! Berlier, you take advantage of the fact that these brave fellows lost their heads for the time being to furnish arguments against me! Do you mean to assert that I have lost my popularity?"

"I really could not say, my dear fellow. I am well aware that you have entered the Chamber with a huge majority at election times. Still, I cannot forget that they were flinging stones at you a few hours ago. Public opinion varies as much as the waves of the sea. In a word, here we have a body of electors to whom you have made all kinds of fine promises: up to the present you have given them nothing but words. That's not very satisfying, and it will not be long before they see that they have been your dupes. . . ."

"Dupes! What's that? Do you accuse me of duping the people?"

"You? Good Heavens! not you alone! You and all the others who make up that glorious institution called the *Bloc*. First of all, you promise them the millions represented by the funds of the Catholic denominational schools—by the way, they did not belong to you, but that made no difference! Where are those millions? Then you promised the Church property, with the object of effecting the separation between Church and State. What has become of this

property? Then you promised Old Age Pensions. When will they receive these pensions? If I cared, I might continue at considerable length, enumerating all the vaunted and pretentious puffs and promises you have from time to time made the working classes. What has been the use of it all? The good people, to whom you promised so much butter, though you did not even give them any bread, are beginning to see that they have been swindled. They are getting angry and impatient. . . . Quite right, too! To-day they tried to blow up the Town Hall, to-morrow they will want to set fire to the château."

"And you'll be there to make fun of the whole thing, I suppose!" exclaimed Dideod, thoroughy exasperated.

"No, my dear fellow, I shall be there to help to extinguish the fire, and I shall be accompanied by all those, like myself, who love order, whom you have cried down and molested, driven from their employment, and forced to live as pariahs and outcasts in their own country. All this, too, for the benefit of these detestable electors of yours, who are now leaving you: that's the kind of justice you meet with in this world!"

Silence followed. After a few moments Mme. Didelod, very much vexed at the turn the conversation had taken, said quietly:

"My dear, could you not reserve these intolerable politics of yours for those occasions on which you happen to be with people who think as you do? Here I am in my *salon,* surrounded by friends who would be only too pleased to engage in agreeable chat on

topics of interest, whilst you are improvising a sitting of the Chamber. . . ."

"You are right, my dear," said the deputy for Lehrange, with a smile. "I forget rather too easily that in this house I am almost alone in my opinions. You are a Royalist, my daughter is almost a Liberal, whilst my son is a Nationalist. As for my friends, they are all reactionists."

Turning gaily to the sub-prefect, he said:

"We are in the minority, for I quite believe the bench would willingly throw us overboard."

"My dear sir," exclaimed the president, "in the Chamber we are exclusively the servants of the law."

"Certainly, my dear president. We know your own integrity, but you cannot stop people from . . ."

M. Jules Reismann coldly interrupted Didelod's remark:

"What is particularly noticeable in your country is the levity with which you treat everything. It would appear that mere oratory was the aim and end of every question. It all evaporates in conversation. Now in Germany things are quite different. . . ."

A unanimous exclamation of protest, coming from the young people behind the piano, interrupted Reismann, who was showing himself so proud of his new country. Turning round, he asked:

"Does any one object to what I say?"

"Since you have ceased to protest, uncle," said Maurice sharply, "you will kindly allow us to do so in your place!"

"Bravo, Maurice!" exclaimed the member for Lehrange. "For once your Nationalism pleases me."

"Well, father, it never varies. It ought to please you always."

"Bravo, Maurice!" repeated M. Jules Reismann, with a laugh. "For once your Nationalism pleases me, too. I like to see a Frenchman who loves his own country. If all the young men of your age thought and spoke so, we would soon change our opinion in Alsace and Lorraine. Nor would the officers of the Prussian army exclaim at mess after dinner: 'France is ours!'"

"We will let them see if it is theirs!" growled Maxime de Berlier. "There are eight hundred dragoons of us here, and we would wish nothing better than to cross lances with the Uhlans over the border."

"Hush, Maxime," said Laurence. "You are the only one here to-night who has not the right to speak, if you do not wish to cause trouble."

"Besides, it is a crime to wish for war!" said one of the daughters of M. de Berlier. "Maxime would have to leave, and Maurice, too."

To bring the discussion to an end, Mme. Didelod proposed a game of bridge. The young people went into the next room; the mothers of Maurice and Maxime stayed behind to enjoy a chat. They had been brought up at the same boarding-school in Paris, and were of one mind on almost every question, their education and environment in general having been identical.

"Your dear husband does not grow any wiser," remarked the Marchioness, a pained expression on her face.

"No, indeed; he regards it as his duty to follow the Socialist train, and it runs fast! I am in despair

when I see so kind and intelligent a man as he is show such a lack of balance."

"Is it ambition?"

"No; he is quite sincere. It is just that which is so difficult to understand. What can we do to open his eyes?"

"In the meantime, what is to become of our plans? I scarcely think that M. Didelod would consent to see his daughter married to Count de Berlier. Laurence is twenty-one: it is time for her to think of settling down. Do you think my husband should speak to M. Didelod?"

"No! All the same, some light must be thrown on the situation; my husband must declare his intentions. We cannot remain as we are, at the mercy of a change in the Ministry. Simply because the Government happens to be more or less Socialist is no reason why my daughter should run the risk of dying an old maid."

"Has he formed any mental reservations regarding Laurence's marriage?"

"I don't think so! he says nothing. At all events, I will mention the matter this very evening and try to see clearly into the situation."

When all the guests had left and the children had gone to their bedrooms, M. and Mme. Didelod were left alone in each other's company. The member for Lehrange crossed over into his office, where his secretary had prepared his evening's correspondence on the desk. He sat down to read his letters. Mme. Didelod also took a seat in an arm-chair near the fireplace, and broke in upon this disposition to work which her husband was showing:

"I wish to speak to you for a few minutes before retiring, for to-morrow you will be engrossed in business and politics. Mme. de Berlier has been speaking to me again of the plans she and her husband had formed regarding a marriage between their son and Laurence. I felt rather embarrassed to know what to say, for you seem to have changed your mind on this matter, and I did not care to risk making a definite promise which I might afterwards be obliged to withdraw."

M. Didelod looked benevolently at his wife as he replied:

"You have done the right thing. This is a delicate matter, and I am greatly obliged to you for the prudence and consideration you have shown. I do not wish to quarrel with Berlier, who is an old friend of mine; but, on the other hand, social contingencies have become so modified that, were I to give my daughter to this aristocratic young Maxime, I should seem as though I were running counter to my own opinions. These Berliers are inveterate Conservatives; they understand nothing of the modern trend of ideas. They are no farther advanced than our countrymen were in 1874, when the throne was offered to the Count de Chambord, and serious discussions took place regarding the adoption of the white flag. It's awful to think of it! These people are quite out of date. We have nothing to expect from them except fault-finding and criticism, whilst they are most abominably compromising!"

"Do you feel concerned about what your daughter thinks? Social contingencies, politics, and friends do

not make up the whole of life. Laurence and her wishes have also to be considered."

"My daughter is a reasonable girl, one who keeps abreast of the times. I have in my mind just the right husband for her. . . ."

"What's this! And not a word to me? Not the slightest suspicion of anything? Have I come to be a mere cipher in your house?"

"How could I speak to you of a project which has only recently shaped itself? I was about to broach the question with you, had you not been the first to speak. Though I regret this on account of the vexation you must feel towards me, still I am quite sure your common sense will approve of the choice I have made."

"Come, then. Tell me. I am all impatience."

"Very well! you know Pierre Bouillaud?"

"The Socialist deputy?"

"Yes. Last year he was Minister of Commerce, and now he is in a fair way to return to power. He is an extraordinary man, an eloquent speaker, very intelligent, young—he is only thirty-six—and likely to attain to the highest destinies. . . ."

"What destinies?"

"He will become the real ruler of his country and leave behind him a glorious name in the history of our times. . . ."

"He will bring France to ruin and decadence, perhaps to a state of bondage. He is a Collectivist and against the army. At public meetings he has given utterance to the most detestable sentiments, stirring up people living in the same country to a state of mutual hatred and basing his popularity on persecution

and violence. The very thought of him fills me with disgust."

"But you don't know him. He is a charming fellow and quite handsome. He will please Laurence, I'm sure. Besides, he has been in the Ministry and his extreme revolutionary ideas have become modified. Now he is prepared to give the requisite guarantees for public order."

"You mean that he is ready to marry the daughter of one of the wealthiest bourgeois in France. What an honour for the bourgeois!"

A frown came over Didelod's countenance; he disliked to be called a bourgeois. His opponents were aware of this weakness of his and acted accordingly.

"I am not a bourgeois," he replied. "I prove every day I live that such a spirit is alien to my character."

"And we have to suffer for it! I should like to know what pleasure you find in playing the part of a revolutionist; the dupe of a crowd of people who flatter and fawn upon you, in the expectation of receiving some advantage or other. They say to you: "You are the bulwark of Socialism. Everything depends upon you!" And they are right! What would they do but for the money with which you supply them? At election time you alone pay out as much money as the whole of the propagandist committee. They may well lavish praise at the price it costs you! Meanwhile they all become members of the Cabinet, whilst you are left on one side. If you are the main support of the party, why do they not find a post for you? Are you one of the leaders, or only an amiable cashier who has undertaken to en-

sure the future of a pack of sly rogues who poke fun at you behind your back?"

This time M. Didelod could not restrain himself, his wife had touched his weak spot too rudely. It was real torture to him to see all his friends obtain offices under the Government, without a single step ever being taken to appoint himself a Cabinet Minister. Every time a change took place in the Government the President of the Republic said to him: "Well, well, my dear Didelod, it appears I am not yet to have the pleasure of working with you in the government of France!" To find himself reminded now by his wife of all his disappointments was too much.

"You find no pleasure in anything except annoying me, though you know quite well I am not ambitious. Had I insisted . . . Bouillaud intends to look into the matter as soon as the House meets again."

"Ah! now the truth has come to light! M. Bouillaud will work for you, and in return you are to give him the hand of your daughter. Very well. Just settle this little matter with Laurence herself; for my part, I will have nothing to do with it."

"'As you please!" said Didelod coolly. "I will speak to her to-morrow."

"I warn you of the kind of reception you will get."

"I do not expect my daughter will show me less respect than she is accustomed to do."

"Your daughter has been well bred; she will fail in none of the forms of deference due to you. But then, she is a clear-headed girl, and she will show you

that she is anything but disposed to pay the ransom of your ambition with her personal liberty. Good night; it is late. Get out of the difficulty as well as you can, since you are bent on opposing the wishes of the rest of the family."

Perfectly calm, Mme. Didelod went from the room, leaving the member for Lehrange to his reflections, which were of anything but a pleasant nature. He was not at all pleased at the prospect of an explanation with his daughter, whose dignity and freedom of speech he knew so well. He had delayed as long as possible the manifestation of his paternal authority, but Mme. Didelod was now placing him under the obligation of making up his mind. All the cruel allusions his wife had made against his line of conduct in politics forced him to examine himself, and this was what he detested more than anything else, for his natural common sense compelled him to acknowledge faults which lowered him in his own estimation. Could it be that he was a dupe and a victim, as Mme. Didelod affirmed? And when his son, Maurice, said to him in bantering tones, "When you are President of the Republic, father," was he really making fun of him? Was he really not taken seriously even by his own family? If that were so, then what must the great public think?

He walked up and down the room, turning these disagreeable thoughts over and over in his mind. So much money spent, so many efforts made—nay, his very life endangered, all unsparingly, without stint. For, after all, that very bomb, which he affected to regard as a harmless toy, might quite easily have blown up the floor of the room in which he was sitting

and torn him into fragments. And the brilliant result of it all was that he was making himself an object of ridicule in the eyes of his own family. No, indeed, it should not be so! The only way he could think of to redeem himself in the opinion of everybody was to attach to his family and fortune the redoubtable Bouillaud, who would ensure for the man who made him his son-in-law such a political triumph as would prove a meet remard for so signal a service. Full of enthusiasm, Didelod contented himself with this conclusion. Ready for any sacrifice to obtain Laurence's aid in bringing about this admirable result, he went to bed, there to repair the fatigue and excitement of that terrible day.

When morning came he started for the works, which he reached about eight o'clock. Every shed was in full activity. The noise of steam-hammers, the creaking of cranes, as they removed masses of cast-iron and placed them under mechanical instruments which cut them up without the least apparent effort, the coming and going of clerks, all testified to the activity and the regularity of production. M. Didelod entered the office and passed through into his private room, where all the heads of departments, summoned by telephone, had collected for the daily consultation. Those who pretended to regard M. Didelod, the deputy, as a mere puppet would speedily have changed their opinion of him had they seen him in the midst of his workmen in his capacity as head and director of the works.

In business life he was his real self, the capable, strong-minded man he ceased to be when his judgment had become obscured by politics. A few brief orders

made his collaborators acquainted with his intentions, stating clearly the work to be done. On this ground he held undisputed sway, feeling himself master in very truth. Everything around him—land, buildings, tools, heaped-up masses of coal and iron—was his own property, ready to become transformed, if he so willed, into machines which would go forth, bearing his name, into every part of the world. He examined his own heart: was not the dream he had formed full of deception, compared with such powerful realities as these? As his wife had said, was he not a dupe to sacrifice the one for the other, grasping at the shadow and flinging aside the substance? He was unwilling to enter deeply into such thoughts, which he found very unpleasant, so he plunged into the work before him.

It was noon when he left. Entering his carriage, he drove back to Badonviller for lunch. The midday meal was always a short affair. Generally speaking, Didelod spoke little, listening absent-mindedly to the conversation between his wife and children. Only when evening came did he put away the business cares of the day. On this occasion, however, he seemed in an amiable humour, asked Maurice questions upon the condition of the game in the preserves, planned invitations, and showed himself particularly gracious towards his daughter. On rising from table he took the latter by the arm, and led her with him out on to the terrace. There he lit a cigar, and the two promenaded up and down those magnificent flower-gardens which formed one of the glories of Badonviller. After a few moments, giving Laurence an affectionate glance, he suddenly said:

"It is a long time since we had a chat together, little one; I reproach myself for it, but, you see, the fact is I am so occupied and busy that I rather neglect my duties as a father. I now wish to atone for these shortcoming on my part and be quite open with you. Come, then, Laurence, you are an intelligent girl and will understand me. I want to see you settled down in life, though I don't want you to make an ordinary marriage."

"What do you mean by an ordinary marriage?" interrupted the young girl calmly.

"I mean the kind of marriage all your friends and companions, all the girls in your station of life, are in the habit of making. This consists in marrying a fashionable youth, well dressed and well bred, rich, though devoid of personal merit, and incapable of being anything else than a commonplace kind of friend throughout life. Amidst the grave social upheavals which are threatening us, I should like to think that a strong arm was sustaining you, keeping you in your place, that is to say, above the rest."

Laurence smiled.

"My dear father, such ideas are not very democratic."

"Ah! my dear child," replied Didelod eagerly, "democracy does not exclude superiority, it rather enhances it, raising it to its real value."

"So the idea has come to you," replied Laurence, "of looking for a superior kind of husband for me. Have you found him?"

"I have."

"Who is he?"

"A man of supreme merit; young and already

famous. An eloquent orator, able to sway the masses as he pleases, a man whom France looks upon as to be counted amongst her leaders and rulers."

"In other words, a Socialist deputy," summed up Mlle. Didelod coldly.

"Yes; his name is. . . ."

"Don't tell me!" interrupted Laurence. "It would be of no avail. I will not even discuss his claims to my consideration, for I shall never marry a politician unless he is a Royalist and a Catholic."

Had a thunderbolt fallen upon the member for Lehrange, he could scarcely have been more astonished than he was by this declaration of his daughter. He looked at her in a state of utter consternation, as though he could not believe his own ears. Then he repeated:

"A Royalist and a Catholic? Is it possible? My dear girl, are you in your right mind?"

"Remember, father," said Laurence, "that we are speaking of a politician. I merely state the opinions he must hold if he is to suit me. Yes, were I to marry a politician, I should like to bear the name of a Montalembert—to avoid taking any one living nowadays as an example. To inspire him with her zeal in maintaining noble religious virtues and immutable social principles; to share in his struggles undertaken in defence of monarchical ideas, sole guarantee of the national dignity and greatness: such, in my opinion, is the share a wife may truly envy in the political career of her husband."

"My dear child," stammered Didelod, "you are fifty years behind the times. . . . That's just the way

your grandmother used to speak. . . . You have almost gone back to the divine right of kings. . . ."

"Not altogether," said Laurence, with a smile, "I am in favour of adult suffrage, modified, however, in its application, which I regard as detestable. We should have to return to voting by departments, and to institute proportional representation."

Didelod gave Laurence an angry look, and, interrupting her in his turn, said:

"You are jesting with me!"

"My dear father, I would not allow myself such a liberty. If, however, you were speaking to me of a political marriage, I make you my confession. . . . If one has ever the right to discuss, it is in politics. . . ."

"I don't want you to discuss, Laurence. I want you to listen to me. . . ."

"Oh!" exclaimed the young girl gaily. "Then what about liberty of conscience? And liberty of choice and every other liberty? Are you abolishing them in your own family?"

She began to laugh, looking at her father with so droll an expression that the latter could find no other resource than to fly into a passion:

"This is indeed a fine recompense for my anxiety on your behalf! Just when I am endeavouring to ensure for you a magnificent future by bringing into my family a man who needs only a large fortune to become the most important individual in the country, you ridicule my intentions and reject my proposals. Very good! You are aware that I will not force you in any way, that I will leave you mistress of your own actions. There is my consent, however, to be considered, and that you shall never obtain on behalf

of a suitor who does not offer such guarantees as I have a right to exact."

"What are those guarantees?"

"I have told you: I will acknowledge as my son-in-law only a man possessed of personal merit, even though he is without fortune."

"The difficulty consists in coming to some understanding as to what you mean by personal merit."

"Well, then, any man who possesses within himself the means of acquiring either a brilliant reputation, a lofty position in the State, or a great fortune."

"In this way you at once rule out of court all sailors and soldiers, who are unable—unless a war happens—a thing I do not in the least desire—to attain to the higher ranks of the service until they are long past middle age. You might just as well have said to me simply: 'I object to your marrying Lieutenant Maxime de Berlier.'"

"You are quite right, I do object."

Laurence gave her father a respectful bow, and, without a word, turned on her heel and went away.

"Where are you going?" he exclaimed.

Coming to a sudden stop, she answered:

"I am going back to my room. After such a declaration I do not know what more we have to say to each other!"

"What do you mean?"

"You have signified what is your will concerning me. I make no answer;I simply go away."

"That is one method of rebellion!"

"Ah! you surely do not expect me to burst out into an ecstasy of joy! Though you have caused me

great pain, I say nothing. That is the most you can expect from me!"

"In other words, you are going to prove sulky."

"By no means; that is not in my nature."

"But you will think all the more of this ninny of a lieutenant, as though nothing had been said on the matter!"

"Maxime has been my friend from childhood. He is very tender-hearted and will suffer keenly."

"You need not say anything to him."

"Such duplicity goes against the grain!"

"And the whole Berlier family will be down on my head!"

"You surely do not expect them to overflow with gratitude to you. They are equal to you in every way, both as regards a highly respectable position in life and an illustrious birth. The greater portion of their property is in Alsace-Lorraine, and the Germans are very gracious to them, although they have not, in cowardly fashion, forsaken France, like some one I know, and who is closely related to you."

A thrill ran through M. Didelod. The choice of Jules Reismann in favour of a German nationality had been a very sore point with him. His partner and brother-in-law had flung himself into the arms of the enemy, and this had been profitable to both of them. Such an act of disloyalty was extremely distasteful to him; this he made no attempt to conceal, and he became exasperated whenever anything happened to bring the existing state of things back to his mind. With a frown he looked haughtily down on his daughter.

"Feeble-minded prejudice! Humanity recognises no frontiers!"

"Then why did you not allow yourself to be annexed? You have not always thought so. Besides, I should not need to search for any considerable time among your professions of faith, to find traces of sympathy with militarism."

"Never! Never!" he exclaimed.

"Come, now, father! Have you not dined with General Boulanger?"

This was the mysterious spot in the whole of his political changes, and no one ever risked an allusion to it. Didelod turned pale, and waved his hand in indignant protest. Still, he did not dare to discuss any longer with so redoubtable an adversary as his daughter.

"Not another word!" he said with considerable dignity. "You are now acquainted with my intentions; I expect you to conform your actions accordingly."

Laurence bowed without a word in reply, and this time went away, without her father making any attempt to recall her.

M. Didelod re-entered the house, took up various papers which lay ready for him on his desk, and, entering his carriage, drove away to the works. His face wore an anxious look; for the first time he found himself seriously at variance with his daughter. He was considerably impressed by the firmness with which Laurence had received his advances. As a rule he found her respectful and conciliatory. She was possessed of considerable tact, and was generally able to avoid colliding with the absolute and exag-

gerated opinions of the member for Lehrange. She would even intervene between her mother and father, and excelled in mitigating the unpleasant relations which often existed between Maurice and M. Didelod. This time she had not budged an inch, she resolutely held her ground. Was it really the case that Maxime was so dear to her? They had grown up by the side of each other in the companionship of childhood, but that was very different from an affection so strong as to warrant Laurence in opposing her father for any length of time. Still, she had declared herself clearly enough, and that was a very serious symptom in one so shrewd as she was. Had her mind not been made up, she would not have been so blunt either in attack or defence. If her heart were already given to Maxime, the resolution her father had reached would cause her considerable pain. At the mere idea of seeing Laurence sad and wretched a shadow passed over M. Didelod's face. Still, could he possibly see her married to this lieutenant of dragoons, this reactionist and supporter of the Church? He, the Socialist deputy, imagined he could hear the gibes and jeers of his party. What a fine thing, too, the papers would make of it! To think that M. Didelod, the stern Republican, the Freethinker, the enemy of militarism, was giving his daughter to the Count de Berlier, a soldier! The betrayal was complete!

Seated in his carriage, M. Didelod shook his head in dismay. He reflected that the politician ought to have no bond of a nature to restrain his freedom of action. The ideal state would be that of a bachelor without a single relative. Immediately, however, he looked into his inmost heart and reflected how

terrible a lonely, unloved life would be! And all for the sake of politics! Was not the whole thing a huge deception? What satisfaction had it brought him so far? Very scanty; on the other hand, his disappointments had been many and great. Would his coming expectations be realised? He ran the risk of bringing trouble into his family, of causing pain to a daughter who had given him nothing but joy and happiness, in order to remain faithful to a programme which his colleagues had adopted through ambition, whilst he . . . He started. No! no! He was convinced that he at all events was sincere! He really did believe in the happiness of mankind by means of a social transformation. He wanted more unity and equality between the citizens of the land. Tyranny he hated, whether coming through kings by force, or through priests by persuasion. For a girl's mere whim he could not belie the principles of his whole life. Laurence's marriage would irremediably compromise him; consequently, it was his duty to oppose it.

He did not care to reflect how frightfully selfish his decision was, regarding it as reasonable if he could shelter his daughter from the dangers and pitfalls a marriage with a reactionist might hold in store for her. With stern determination he persisted in the decision he had made. At that moment he descended from the carriage and, giving his papers to the door-keeper, entered the office. Immediately he noticed something unusual: the hall-attendant was not seated, as was his wont, at his table, and the door of the forwarding department was wide open. Disorder and confusion seemed to reign everywhere; the

very clerks, instead of being engaged at their desks, were standing about talking to one another. Considerably astonished, Didelod refrained all the same from any personal observations. Passing through to his private room, he rang up the telephone, thus placing himself into communication with the head secretary. A minute later the latter entered the room.

"What's the meaning of all this, M. Garneret?" asked the master in tones of displeasure. "No one in the hall; the clerks all chattering away instead of attending to their correspondence. I hear nothing but the hum of conversation instead of the click of typewriters. . . . Is anything unusual taking place here?"

An anxious look came into M. Garneret's face.

"I know nothing definite, sir; though something indeed is happening, and that not of a very pleasant nature. Two of the cementing furnaces have gone out."

"What's that? Have the stokers given up work?"

"No, they have not given up work; they have been forced, however, to keep back the fuel."

"Is it a case of ill-will?"

"Most assuredly; though the heads deny it."

"What excuses do they bring forward?"

"The quality of the coal."

"An evasion! The fuel has not been changed. You instituted an inquiry?"

"Immediately. The result left no ground for doubt. It has been ascertained that the stokers of both furnaces were brought into contact with Stylb last week when he came to Lehrange. I should not be at all surprised if this is not an attempt to strike."

"Here? At my works? Are you aware that there has been perfect accord between masters and men for upwards of fifty years? A strike at Lehrange? Impossible!"

"Twenty-four hours ago I would have said the same. But after what I have seen this morning, I don't know what to think."

"Who are the chief stokers?"

"Marteau and Seigneurier."

"Both are intelligent fellows. What are they doing just now?"

"They are cleaning the furnaces."

"They have not given up work then?"

"Not at all."

"Well, then, what are you afraid of?"

"Everything and nothing. How comes it that the clerks are all excited over a thing of so little importance as the extinction of two furnaces, unless the fact in itself had some special meaning? There is an evil feeling abroad. They say nothing, but look at each other; no one taking the initiative, for the results might be far-reaching. They are waiting for a word, a sign. In a word, a spirit of revolt is imminent. You can feel it."

"On what grounds?"

"The Neumans affair."

"What has that to do with our business?"

"Nothing from a business, everything from a social point of view. It involves the solidarity of the workmen."

"What folly!"

"True; but you are aware that the orders come from Paris, and that if the revolt of the workers in

our district were looked upon as necessary for political purposes, the order would be given and the revolt would take place."

"We have not come to that pass. I have friends on the committee. . . ."

"I hope your friends are sincere and above suspicion."

"Were they to betray me, I should know how to punish them."

"But the harm would be done."

"Don't be afraid, M. Garneret; it will prove no easy matter to get the better of Didelod and ruin Lehrange!"

"Ah!" exclaimed the secretary, "your optimism makes me tremble!"

"Meanwhile, see to it that the strictest order is maintained in both offices and workshops. If the slightest incident happens, inform me. I shall stay in the whole day."

CHAPTER V

BLOWING THE FIRE

IN the back parlour of "The Pineapple" the workmen delegates were met together in consultation. Tournemarie, jovial as ever, was giving the others an account of the progress of events. Grangel, the schoolmaster, was gloomily listening.

"The workmen of Lehrange are difficult to stir. All the reasons we have given to the representatives of the union have been approved of as good and useful. Here, however, we have to deal with people who have been accustomed for three generations to work for the same masters, on the same spot, almost with the same tools. It is no easy matter for them to change their habits. They are well paid and have no claims to make, no fault to find with the conditions of labour. When you go and talk to them of the general interests of the proletariat they make no attempt to contradict you, but you can see they are thinking all the time. What has that to do with us? Are we going put ourselves about for those who have never concerned themselves about us for some vague, sentimental reason? The important thing for us is to earn our living, and that we are doing. When we have given up work for a cause which—so we are told—is common to all workmen, what shall we gain thereby? We shall be out of employment. And how long will that state of things last? Don't come and tell us that we shall have the upper hand

of our master; that, by going on strike, we shall force him to do as we wish. It's not true! Before M. Didelod is ruined and Lehrange deserted we shall all be dead of hunger. In other words, the fight is too one-sided; we shall never bring Lehrange to terms. M. Didelod is so wealthy, his resources are inexhaustible. Besides, whatever happens, there will be no necessity for him to cease work. If Lehrange were to strike to-morrow Steingel would double its output, and there you are! A strike here would be a senseless affair; we must leave work only if compelled to do so. That's how opinion runs at Lehrange, nor should we be surprised at it. All the same, the influence of our party is so strong that, in spite of everything, an attempt has been made to effect a stoppage. A couple of furnaces have been extinguished. Didelod, however, pretends to look upon this as an accident, and pays no attention to it. . . . He is a sly rogue. The two head stokers have not been dismissed, and we shall have to make a fresh start."

"What shall we do?"

"The best thing would be a disturbance in the street—a row with the military or the police. That would rouse the workmen. The outcry, 'They are murdering our brothers!' never loses its effect; no crowd has ever been known to resist it. Once the people begin to move, he will be a clever man who will stop them."

"Then they must be made to move, and there the difficulty begins. As you know, Didelod paid no attention to the bomb at the Town Hall; no summons, no one prosecuted. Every one is informed

that the explosion is to be attributed to a lad's carelessness."

"Shall we have to blow up the prefecture or the assize court before they will take the matter seriously?"

"We must think of something else," remarked the schoolmaster, who now spoke for the first time. "Materially, nothing can be done, for the workmen are content with their lot. Some incident will have to be thought of belonging to the moral order of things, one capable of coming to a critical pass and supplying all the elements of a popular riot."

He stopped, gave Tournemarie a domineering look, and continued abruptly:

"For my part, I will allow no personal consideration to stand in the way when we have to deal with revolutionary methods. Our own party interests must disappear before the greatness of the cause at issue, our own sentiments must be considered of no importance whatsoever. Consequently, I shall now speak out freely, nay, even brutally. Tournemarie is in a position to supply us with an excuse for the incident I have just mentioned; one capable of rousing the working classes to a pitch of fury."

The jovial look on Tournemarie's face changed into one of anxiety. He said uneasily:

"I? In what way?"

"In a way independent of your own will. Fortune has taken upon herself to supply one. The important thing is: Will you adopt it?"

"Explain yourself. What is it?"

"Now we have reached a difficult pass, but, as I have just said, no personal consideration shall stop

me. If you had to draw lots amongst yourselves as to who should give himself up to what the leisured classes call a criminal attempt, and what you call direct action, you would not hesitate, would you? And yet the life of one of you would doubtless be sacrificed. In this case we are dealing with a moral offence, though one which will increase the class hatred which fills you, for the guilty man, the one who has offended Tournemarie, is one of our worst enemies—a soldier."

"What has he done?" exclaimed the workman, turning pale.

"He has formed an intrigue with your elder daughter!" replied Grangel harshly. "The sport of an aristocrat!"

"The deuce!" exclaimed Tournemarie, dashing his fist on the table so heavily as to set rattling all the glasses and bottles. "How do you know it?"

"Know it? I have met them together."

"When did you see them first?"

"Over two months ago. Lately I have not seen them, for evidently they suspect something. To explain the lateness of the hour at which she returns, doubtless the girl tells you she has extra work to finish, whilst the lieutenant supplies the money needed to keep the accounts correct. Well, then, if you want to revenge yourself and serve the cause at the same time, you have only to surprise them. There will be a row; our friends will be on the spot to help you. And if, by good fortune, the officer defends himself, then we are on the right side and the game is ours."

He stopped, his eyes fixed on Tournemarie, who sat there without a word.

"Well!" he continued, "you must show yourself a man of action. Don't look so gloomy, Tournemarie. I thought you had more life in you!"

"Ah!" groaned the workman, "it's an easy matter for you to speak; you have neither wife nor child yourself. But I am thinking of Hortense and that villian of a lieutenant! The wretch! I'll kill him!"

"Come, then! I see you understand the situation!" said Grangel, with a grim smile. "If such is your intention, however, I would advise you to choose your opportunity. Set a trap for him, but do it so cunningly that he cannot escape. If only we could arrange so that some of his friends might be there also to defend him. Your friends would back you up, and there would be a regular fight. I must think out the whole matter!"

Tournemarie sprang violently to his feet.

"Not another word. It's very easy for you to speak lightly of a misfortune which affects no one but myself. Listen. I don't intend to allow myself to be used as your tool; I will avenge myself alone and in my own way. I feel no great admiration for you in telling me of this thing in so blunt a fashion. You are a fine speaker, Grangel, but you have not convinced me that it is my duty to sacrifice my inmost sentiments to party interests."

"All right!" remarked Grangel. "Whether you decide to act on behalf of the cause, or merely to satisfy your personal spite, I don't think it has done you any harm to learn the truth. Would you have liked to continue being foolish in this way, as you have been for the past two months?"

"Two months! And I suspected nothing!"

"My dear fellow, it would be too much to expect that you could go about preaching revolutionary doctrines to Neumans' workmen and keep an eye on affairs at home as well. You have a good excuse in this case, but you will have none at all if you let yourself go unavenged."

Tournemarie made no reply. Taking down his cap from the peg, he muttered a curt good night, opened the door, and went out into the street. Grangel said to the remaining delegates:

"Poor Tournemarie, he has gone to thrash the matter out for himself. It went considerably against the grain for me to tell him the truth. You see, friends, what trouble militarism is capable of bringing into family life. The very training and general existence of a soldier is calculated to turn him into a brute. All that is going to change, however. Once we gain the upper hand, hostile surprises will be impossible. The sentiment of brotherhood will bring about a good understanding with our neighbours across the frontiers, and the blood tax—compulsory military service—hideous relic of the barbarous systems of the past, will finally be abolished. Then the middle and upper classes may look about in vain for some one to defend their safes and money-bags; they will have to give in. Thus, in a single day, we shall recover the public fortune, wrested from us by unscrupulous monopolists, we shall regain that feeling of social security which is continually being menaced by military force. The only barrier still standing between ourselves and power is the army. Then, 'Down with the army!' should be our watchword."

"Yes, but suppose our neighbours of whom you

speak, who are in arms beyond the frontiers, make up their minds some fine day to attack us, our disarmament might cost us dear. If we had to deal with German authority and discipline, that would be a different thing from French authority. Those who represent the Kaiser in the Empire would not trifle about the matter, nor should we have long to wait for sword thrusts. If it is a case of tyranny in whichever direction we turn, I prefer to suffer at the hands of my own fellow-countrymen rather than at the hands of strangers."

"That's the kind of absurd sentimentality which enervates so many!" exclaimed the schoolmaster angrily. "Because a man happens to have been born beyond or on this side of an arbitrarily traced line, he is to be French or German. There are neither French nor Germans, there are only living beings, the one like the other, and all capable of suffering. Let us make a start by abolishing human misery, and then we shall see what colour the flag that protects us will have to be. Are you faithful comrades, ready to devote your lives to the cause, or would you rather retreat before the consequences of necessary action?"

With determined looks all present rose to their feet and, without a word, shook Grangel's hand. With a smile of satisfaction, he continued:

"Good! I see I can rely on you. We had better separate now, and not attract attention by too prolonged a meeting. Perhaps you are not aware that we are watched."

"By whom?"

"There is not a grouping of men in the whole

country without spies being present. Then again, Gaudin, who is Didelod's familiar, spends his whole time in making up reports about me for his master's information. . . ."

"Gaudin? What can he say? He knows nothing. And Didelod, can he be such a fool as to imagine that we can be taken in by his Socialism? He is an exploiter like the rest; being wealthier, he is only the greater culprit. The day will come when he will have to give up his forty millions, stolen from toiling men and women by his grandfather, his father, and himself ever since Lehrange came into being as an industrial centre!"

"Come, come, my dear fellow, every account shall be paid when the great day of settlement arrives. Those fools of capitalists who play at being democrats have got it into their heads that the opinions they profess will prove their salvation. They will be the very first victims! . . ."

A general laugh followed. Then the parlour door was opened and, one after another, they went out into the street.

. . . . . .

Faithful to her promise, Mme. Didelod, as soon as she had heard her husband's intentions, had gone to Fleurance to call on her friend, the Marquise de Berlier. Farther away from the frontier than Badonviller, Fleurance is situated on a kind of cliff, at the foot of which runs the Verveille. The position would prove a very powerful one if ever it were found necessary to resist the attack of a hostile force. Maxime de Berlier had often said to his father in jest: "If ever we have war, I shall be sure to be found fighting

in the Fleurance Park. There will be a battery of cannon on the terrace, and when we return home after the war, we shall not find one single stone of the château left lying on another." One day, when the Marquis de Berlier, in doleful strains, stated in the presence of M. Jules Reismann that he was afraid his son's reflections contained a considerable element of truth:

"Calm yourself," said the member of the Reichstag coldly. "Our uhlans would be in Lehrange even before your dragoons would have had time to pack out. It is not there that fighting will take place, my dear sir; it is at Nancy. You will be engaged half an hour after the campaign has commenced."

"Many thinks!" exclaimed the marquis. "Rather than be protected in that fashion, I would prefer to see my house burnt to the ground!"

"How fond you French are of exaggerating, with your everlasting Don Quixotism! Will you kindly explain to me what advantage France would gain from the burning of your château?"

It was on this famous terrace of Fleurance, which afforded so commanding a view over the surrounding country, that the two ladies were now strolling as they chatted together.

"I do not think there need be any occasion to despair," said Mme. Didelod. "Laurence has declared to her father that it is useless to bring forward another suitor, and that she will have nothing to do with a political marriage. You see, my dear, she is a very intelligent girl, and has no intention of sacrificing herself to the Socialistic whims and fancies of her father. She knows the worth of the members

of the party with which M. Didelod has identified himself; men without education, unscrupulous, of a generally shady past, with undesirable relatives, and the only thing you might claim in their favour being audacity and a certain kind of eloquence. Not a very tempting prospect for a girl brought up as Laurence has been."

"I do not know if you are like myself," said Mme. de Berlier, "but I am actually beginning to feel bewildered, out of my element, so to speak, in my own country. Everything around seems to be in a state of change—customs, ideas, feelings, even the outward signs of good breeding. During the past ten years a transformation has been taking place in society, which makes it impossible for one to recognise it. Things cannot continue at this rate; if they do we shall have a complete social revolution upon us, plunging our country into a state of anarchy, or else a dictatorship to restore the principle of authority and put everything back into its place. In thus expressing myself I do not think I am speaking too strongly. It seems to me that a nation cannot live in a condition of disorder, at the caprice and whims of the masses; there must be some controlling force. Now this control must not consist solely in inciting to plunder, rob, and enslave the other half."

"In my opinion, the revolutionary party would lead us to disaster," replied Mme. Didelod; "but what I regard as particualrly unpleasant are the methods employed. Alas! I have frequent opportunities to see at close quarters the heads of the movement, and the thing that strikes me most is their bad education, rude manners, and the coarse-

ness of their sentiments. They are indeed low-born creatures; such a one Laurence would not tolerate. With regard to every suitor her father brings forward, she will have the same feeling of repugnance we are now giving expression to. It is a physical abhorrence; these people, in plain words, are not of the same race as ourselves. There may be talent, even genius, among them. That, however, is not sufficient, they must avoid looking like zinc-workers dressed up in their Sunday clothes."

"Then what shall we do in the case before us?"

"I think you will have to appear sulky and angry with us. For all his bragging, M. Didelod is very sensitive and thin-skinned. He has been your husband's friend from childhood, and is quite accustomed to quarreling and disputing with him. He will miss M. de Berlier greatly. Besides, at the same time that he fawns upon the revolutionary party, Didelod attaches considerable importance to the necessity of keeping on good terms with those of our own station. A rupture with you might cause him considerable embarrassment; it will do him good to reflect seriously before bringing about such a result. For all these reasons, I would recommend you to stay beneath your tent, even to show a certain degree of hostility."

"Poor Maxime!" exclaimed Mme. de Berlier, "he is passionately devoted to your daughter! What a privation it will be for him if he is no longer allowed to see her."

"If he does not, that will be because he does not know how to go about it. It is not my place to advise him in such a matter, but really we have a sufficiently large number of mutual acquaintances for

him to have every opportunity. I do not feel in the least concerned regarding Laurence; nothing will prevent her from speaking to Maxime whenever she meets him. She would do it before M. Didelod himself, and that without the least hesitation. Too often in her presence has her father pleaded on behalf of feminine independence, the free disposal of one's person, and the right to live one's own life...according to Ibsen's famous theory, so convenient, by the way, for those who wish to avoid their duties...for him to find it possible to restrict his daughter's liberty of action. She will oppose him with dignity. Of course, as a mother, I shall be obliged to blame her for it; but as a woman I shall feel that she is altogether in the right."

"Tell me," remarked Mme. de Berlier, "have you anything fresh to relate regarding the strike at Lehrange? They say things are not proceeding at all satisfactorily, and that the affair at the Town Hall the other day was a very serious one, in spite of what M. Didelod says."

"Before my husband will acknowledge that his companions are rogues and villians, you would almost have to put his head beneath the guillotine, and even then he would declare it to be a reactionists' plot! His blindness or obstinacy, for I cannot tell exactly which it is, becomes quite touching, almost sublime. As you may imagine, he does not confide in me, especially if things turn out badly. Nothing could possibly have happened likely to vex and annoy him so much as this trouble regarding the workmen. You see, he was always repeating: 'In my own district, owing to my Liberal principles and general influence,

there is nothing in the nature of a disturbance or strike that I need fear.' You may imagine how displeased he is. If nothing but money were needed to restore everything to a state of order, he would spend all he has; but, so far as I can understand, the impulse of the movement is from Paris; M. Didelod is unable to exercise any influence. It is useless for him to say that Socialists are brothers; he and they are quite different beings. Their feeling towards him is one of mistrust, whilst at bottom he thinks of them with disdain and scorn. They are bent on exploiting him; his dream is to be their leader. Will they make him their victim and dupe, or will he succeed in checkmating them? The chances are that M. Didelod will go to the wall, for he is a very scrupulous man, whilst his opponents have no scruples whatever."

"My son, who knows how the people in Lehrange talk, and sees the reports brought to the staff of the brigade, declares that things are going badly, and that an attack may be made. . . . Against whom? No one knows; but a feeling of uneasiness is prevalent. The Neumans strike, it appears, is nothing but the prelude to a mighty movement of the workers in the district. They go so far as to say that the French workmen would like to have all foreign hands dismissed."

"What! The men of Alsace-Lorraine who work at Lehrange? But they are Frenchmen!"

"They look upon them as Germans, and affirm that their willingness to accept reduced wages is the cause of the low price of labour."

"But what of their doctrine of Internationalism? Do they make distinctions between the workers?"

"That is a question which troubles them little; they will swear that a thing is black or white according as it is useful or useless to them. They have no scruples about breaking their word. The interests of the proletariat they bring forward as the supreme argument which makes everything legitimate. That is their divine right. And yet they cry out against the doctrines of infallibility and absolute power!"

"If any serious rioting takes place here, I shall die of anxiety. I am by no means certain that M. Didelod will refrain from playing some part in it; in which case I am terribly afraid he will choose the most violent of all. He knows only too well that counsels of moderation are never listened to, and his happiness makes it quite essential that he be granted an attentive hearing."

"Very good! All the same, however much one listens to him, there is little chance of his being understood. I scarcely think he is the kind of man to preach revolution against himself. What could he say of a nature to satisfy a set of fanatics who have made up their minds to abolish private ownership? Doubtless the whole thing will end in violence. I can scarcely imagine M. Didelod amongst those who will give blows, whilst he seems to me to have been born to receive them."

"And then, what shall I do with my son Maurice, who seems to have the very deuce in him under such circumstances? I feel strongly inclined to send him off to England. Ah! how horrible politics are! I might truthfully say that they have been the torment of my life! Listen. I will never consent to see my daughter married to a politician. To think of her

going through all the worry and trouble I have had in my own life. . . . Besides, I should be certain beforehand that before six months had passed M. Didelod would no longer be in agreement with his son-in-law, either because he would go beyond him or not go far enough....One's home would be a regular Chamber of Deputies. Better go and live in an asylum at once!"

The two friends had made their way to the main courtyard, all planted with ancient trees, where Mme. Didelod's carriage was standing in the shade.

"If you learn anything, you will inform me at once, will you not?" asked the deputy's wife. "Rely upon me as you would upon yourself, as regards the subject which interests us both."

Mme. Didelod entered the carriage and returned to Badonviller by way of the forest.

. . . . . .

Tournemarie, unscrupulous as he was, had not regarded the information he had received from the schoolmaster as a mere commonplace piece of news. There grew within his heart a violent passion, fed by the alcohol he had drunk during the meeting and the thoughts that came to him as he returned home. His mind was embittered by the troubles of life, increased in his case by the irregularity of his employment; consequently, he made the leisured classes responsible for all his difficulties; a simpler matter than trying to discover if he were not himself the cause of them. He walked along, muttering to himself, until he came to the banks of the Verveille. He had been going in the wrong direction, so he now

suddenly came to a halt before the bridge leading to the lower part of the town.

"Well! if this is the way I expect to reach home, I shall be there in the morning!" he muttered. "It's all the fault of that daughter of mine that my brains have gone wool-gathering! I shall have something to say to her shortly."

Retracing his steps, he proceeded along a silent, deserted street, at the end of which he distinguished a female form hastening along. He stopped as though petrified and hid himself behind a wall. In the passer-by he had just recognized his own daughter. Stifling an oath, he carefully thrust his head forward and watched. She was still walking rapidly, then, pushing open a door, she disappeared into a garden. Tournemarie thought for a moment, then he looked at his watch. It was five o'clock.

According to rule, Hortense ought only to leave her work at six o'clock. So Grangel had told the truth. The workman examined the surroundings; in front of the house a market-gardener possessed a large plot of land, covered with garden-frames and bell-glasses; next a dealer in forage occupied a large shed, the main entrance to which was in the street running parallel, almost every house of which was a shop. Right opposite the door, behind which Hortense had disappeared, was the grimy, smoky shed of a blacksmith, to the door of which a white horse was fastened. The slow, intermittent clang of the hammer on the anvil indicated that the blacksmith was not worked to death. Farther on were private houses. Tournemarie thought to himself: "If I go and knock at the garden door and ask for my

daughter, I shall get no answer of a satisfactory nature, for they will pass her out by another door, and I shall have given the alarm. I must act prudently and keep close watch." Leaving his post, he came close up to the house, examining it carefully. As he proceeded along the wall, Tournemarie was certain no one could see him from the house. There was a lane running along the end of the wall; this he followed, and discovered that the door of a cart-shed gave access to the servants' quarters and the stables. If he stopped at the corner of the two streets, under the gable-end of the wall, it would be impossible for any one to leave the garden without being seen by him. But how could he stay there on guard without some passer-by noticing him and wondering what he was doing, or some neighbour perhaps giving the alarm? Besides, how could he endure the thoughts that kept surging into his brain? The torture would last longer than he could endure, so, at all hazards, he determined to enter by the door leading to the garden.

He closed it quietly behind him, and found himself in a well-cultivated garden, with finely sanded walks. Without halting, Tournemarie walked straight to the house, mounted a stone flight of steps, and was on the point of entering when Lieutenant Maubrun's orderly appeared on the scene.

"What do you want?" he asked abruptly.

"I want to speak to your master," said Tournemarie.

"My master? He is on duty at the barracks. There is no one in the house but myself."

"Then, my fine fellow, if you are alone, I suppose

it was to see you that a young lady called a minute ago...."

"To see me? A young lady? My dear fellow, you've lost your eyesight!"

Whilst replying to Tournemarie, the gay flash in the eyes of the dragoon formed a striking contrast with the seriousness of his countenance. It was so evident he was making sport of Tournemarie that the latter ,already excited enough before he entered, now lost what little self-possession remained to him. His face turned crimson and he began to exclaim aloud:

"So you're making a fool of me, are you? Better stop that game, my fine fellow! I tell you my daughter is here! If you don't bring her to me, I intend to go and look for her!"

The orderly waited to hear no more. With one hand he seized Tournemarie by the collar of his coat, with the other he caught hold of him by the thigh, and with the utmost ease walked with him down the stone steps, where he deposited him gently on the sand, with the words:

"Enough! You must go away, you cannot create a disturbance in a private house. Your daughter is not here. If you want an explanation, come along to the cafe opposite and we will take a drink together."

Pale with anger, Tournemarie attempted to reply to these conciliatory words. Confused and incoherent sounds escaped from his contracted lips. Unable to express himself in speech, he had recourse to action. Thrusting his hand into the breast of his coat, he drew out a revolver, which he pointed full at the dragoon.

"Come, none of that!" said the orderly. "You don't want to disfigure one of your own class."

Saying which, he seized the workman by the hand. A shot was heard, and with a crash a pane of glass from the first-floor window fell on the pavement. At that very instant Lieutenant Maubrun, astonished at the noise, appeared at the door. A single glance enabled him to recognize Tournemarie, who, exasperated, took aim at the officer. The second ball whistled past Maubrun's ears.

"Ah! the old fool is determined to kill me!" exclaimed the young man, more annoyed than terrified, "Come, Chauvin, off with him!"

Again the dragoon ran up to Tournemarie. After disarming him, he passed both the arms of the workman behind his back, and held him there motionless with the most extraordinary ease.

"Now then, take him outside!"

"You villian!" shouted Tournemarie. "You want to prevent me from coming face to face with my daughter. I know she is here, for I saw her enter! Ah! Wretch!"

He raised a hue and cry, with the object of stirring up the people in the neighbourhood; and indeed, every one within hearing came trooping up. The dragoon did his best to reason with the workman:

"Are you mad? There is no sense in what you are doing. Are you bent on every one knowing that your young lady is here? Peace, come along with me; we will go out by the stables."

Kicking and struggling, Tournemarie offered the most stubborn resistance to Chauvin, who began to drag him away. Finding himself the weaker of the

two, he suddenly made up his mind to shout out: "Help! Murder!"

This time the people invaded the garden. They were preceded by the one policeman of the town, who had unfortunately strolled in that direction. He took the revolver, still smoking, from the hand of the dragoon and, turning sternly to Tournemarie, said:

"Is this revolver yours? What are you doing here? Why did you fire?"

"I came to look for my daughter," exclaimed the workman; "and I don't intend to go away without her...."

"Come along and explain yourself at the police-station...."

Lieutenant Maubrun, unwilling that the matter should be taken seriously, signed to the policeman, and pointing to the crowd of idlers standing there in the garden, said:

"First of all, show these good fellows the door; they have no business here. Then I will explain matters."

"Very good! Come, now, gentlemen, please, out into the street!...This is not your affair...."

Pushing the rabble towards the gate ,in spite of their remarks and questions, he cleared the garden. Then the lieutenant said to his orderly:

"Chauvin, release him."

Turning to the policeman, he said:

"There have only been a few windows broken, and there is no necessity to attach importance to an incident which has none. Take that man away and let nothing more be said."

"What! Nothing more be said?" exclaimed Tournemarie, whose common sense had returned by this time. "We will see about that. Come along to the station...."

"Go along to the deuce if you like!" replied the lieutenant impatiently. "You cannot force me to lodge a complaint against you unless I wish to do so. Take this man away, wherever you like, policeman. This scene has lasted quite long enough. Good day."

Without further discussion the offiecr re-entered the house, shutting the door behind him. Tournemarie, paying no attention to the orderly, said to the policeman:

"You have my revolver. Take note that I fired twice at the officer. Now come along to the police-station, or else give me back my weapon, and I will begin again."

"Come along," repeated the policeman mechanically.

"You'll make a fool of yourself if you take him," declared Chauvin.

"I cannot do otherwise. There have been a score of witnesses to the scene, and this madman says that he will begin again. If anything serious were to take place, I should be held responsible...."

"Well! I hope you may have a pleasant time of it."

Out in the street Tournemarie and the policeman were met by an inquisitive mob with exclamations of satisfaction. They formed a procession and made their way along the street. After proceeding a few hundred yards, about a dozen of Tournemarie's comrades, strikers like himself, recognised the foreman and began a demonstration. Forming up behind

him, without knowing what had taken place, they issued stirring appeals to the populace; but seeing that the inhabitants stood at their doors amazed, though without stirring a step, they began to roar out the "Internationale." The policeman, alarmed at the turn his march to the station had assumed, pressed forward, holding Tournemarie tightly by the arm, as though to prevent him from making his escape. At the start they had been walking quietly side by side, but when they reached the centre of the town, the attitude, that of a warder taking a criminal into custody, had become tragic. At the police-station the compact mass of loungers and strikers raised a hoot of derision. As the foreman and the policeman disappeared in the room the workmen, greatly excited, attempted to force the door. Driven back, they hurled out insults and curses, and, incorrectly informed as to what had happened by those who had witnessed the scene in the garden from the commencement, they scattered in every direction, calling to their comrades for aid. The idea came to one of the workmen to spread abroad that M. Didelod had had Tournemarie arrested in revenge for the explosion at the Town Hall. Immediately the rumour was bruited that an anarchist assault had just been made against the cavalry barracks, and that an officer of dragoons had been wounded.

At the station cafe, where the military were wont to meet, two officers in uniform met a band of strikers coming from the suburbs. The workmen at once raised the cry: "Down with the army! Long live Socialism!" Closely pressed, the two officers hastened to beat a retreat, so as not to compromise themselves

in a street row. They entered the cafe, followed by the howling mob. A moment after a hail of stones beat down upon the shop front, breaking the glass windows. At the same time all the tables standing on the terrace outside were overturned, and the customers vanished, all bruised and bleeding. The proprietor, in a furious rage, made his appearance on the threshold of his establishment, but he was immediately struck by a large stone full in the face and fell backwards.

In a state of consternation, the soldiers, understanding nothing of what was taking place, had retreated to the other end of the room, and were consulting with one another, as to what was the best thing they could do. At this critical moment the problem was solved by the cry which was now raised: "To the barracks!" In obedience to a sudden impulse, the rioters made their way in a mass in the direction of the military buildings, shrieking, threatening, and dealing blows as they went. There they were met by the guard. The dragoons, warned by the sentry, had taken up arms, and a picket of soldiers opposed the crowd, whilst trumpet calls resounded on every hand. The town was already astir, and false rumours of every kind were spread abroad. The police-inspector had not finished questioning Tournemarie before telephone calls from the Town Hall were warning him of what was happening, begging him to do his best to bring affairs to a peaceful conclusion.

At the same time General de Largueil was informed of what was taking place. Followed by an orderly, he immediately betook himself in uniform to the

Chevert Square. He arrived just as the demonstration was beginning to grow threatening. He rode quietly along, at a walking pace, on his chestnut horse, the workmen so closely packed together that they touched his stirrups. The proud attitude of the brave soldier impressed the crowd, which grew suddenly silent as a passage was made for him. Reaching the picket of dragoons still drawn up threateningly before the entrance to the barracks the general turned his steed so as to face the people and in a calm, strong voice, said:

"Come, now, my friends, what is the matter? I have been informed that you are on strike. If so, we are not manufacturers; the only thing we work for is the defence of our country. As you well know, we are close to the frontier. What have we done to displease you? What fault have you to find with us? These brave fellows you see here in arms belong to the people like yourselves; they are going through their military service as you have done. Surely you cannot wish them any harm. What, then, is the meaning of these threats and this crowd here?"

Quite intimidated, the workmen stood there dumb. A humiliating silence lay heavy on the crowd, when a strident voice was heard in accents of hate and indignation:

"We have nothing to reproach the soldiers with! It's the officers who are rogues and villains!"

Whereupon, as though the charm had been broken, a storm of cries arose, whilst a portion began to sing the "Internationale," rendering speech impossible and explanations of no avail. Thereupon the old soldier, sadly bowing his head, turned round his

horse and gave a brief order. All the soldiers behind him re-entered the court; the heavy door of the barracks turned slowly on its hinges and was shut. The rioters round themselves alone in the square. At first they seemed amazed; immediately afterwards they burst into a cry of triumph:

"Long live Socialism!"

Just at that moment the chief constable appeared, followed by the policeman. He was well known to those present, and looked upon as a brave man by all. Never was he wantonly severe, making it always a point to fulfil his unpleasant functions in a fatherly fashion. On this occasion he was the representative of authority. Without the faintest hestitation, although facing a numerous and threatening body of men, he came forward and said firmly:

"Come, now, you cannot collect here! You must clear off! I don't wish to storm and rave, but don't let me have to tell you a second time...."

Alone he advanced into their midst. The policeman, unfavourably impressed by the rough handling he had received, followed at a respectful distance. The constable soon found himself the centre of a crowd of grinning, threatening faces. Closely pressed, he managed to reach the door of the barracks; there he took up his stand, facing the angry sea.

"I call upon you to disperse," he exclaimed. "What do you expect to gain by remaining here? Come now, obey! Will you compel me to call out the military?"

"They have left you in the lurch! Go and look for them in the barracks!"

Renewed shouting greeted these violent words. A

hundred hands were stretched towards the flag which was waving above the door of the barracks, and the fanatics, suddenly roused to action, shouted out:

"Down with it! Down with the flag!"

A jeering voice was heard saying:

"I'll tear it down!"

A man wearing a blue coat and velvet trousers came forward. He was a tiler, named Chapuis, a pot-house wag more active in delivering inflammatory speeches than in mounting a roof. He proved in a moment that it was not strength, but the taste for work, in which he was lacking.

Jostling the sentry-box into position, he set it in front of the door. Pulling himself up by main force, he seized the flag and threw it down into the dust. The constable attempted to pick it up, when one of the madmen present snatched it, and, tearing away the stuff, fastened a red flag on to the flagstaff and waved it in triumph above his head. The crowd shouted:

"The red flag! Hurrah! The red flag! Three cheers for the revolution! Down with the army! Up with the constable in place of the flag!"

At once the officer of the law was seized by a score of arms, and Chapuis, mounting once more on to the sentry-box, was fastening a stout piece of cord to the iron ring which had supported the flagstaff, when the barrack door opened again. Violently jostled, the sentry-box rolled over on to its side, and a troop of dragoons, four abreast, began to defile into the square. A blast of trumpets was heard, and in a moment the mob was driven back into the adjacent streets, filling the air with furious shrieks. In

the middle of the empty square, strewn with the lost caps and hats of the flying crowd, there remained none but the general and his officers, deliberating with the constable.

. . . . . .

Didelod and Bouillaud were conversing together in the sub-prefect's office. The Socialist deputy had arrived by the four o'clock express, and had immediately given notice to the member for Lehrange of his presence in the town. The sub-prefect had given up his office to them, retiring into his own private room, as he had no desire to be present at a conversation the consequence of which, from a political point of view, might be very serious. Young Crânet, a bold, determined upstart, was bent on seeing how the wind blew before making up his mind as to which of the two members would be the more likely to advance his own political career. He had gone to meet the train by which Bouillaud had arrived, without saying a word to Didelod, for he wished to have a few words in private with the Socialist chief. Then, after leaving him in his office, he had gone himself to hunt up the member for Lehrange.

Seated facing each other, the two politicians were engaged in an animated conversation. Bouillaud, a young lawyer of thirty-two, crafty as an attorney and prudent as an old judge, never letting himself go, except of deliberate purpose, was the cleverest tactician in the Socialist party. In meetings and congresses he had given evidence of a degree of skill and pliability which had enabled him to retain the favourable opinions of the theorists of Collectivism on the one hand, and of men of revolutionary leanings on

the other. He was of average height, very dark-complexioned, and had piercing eyes guarded by threatening eyebrows and a small mouth. His voice was sonorous and delightful to listen to. No sooner did he begin to speak than silence fell on all around. Sometimes he took an unfair advantage of this charming gift, and would speak merely for the sake of speaking. Never did an utterer of hollow-sounding phrases pass for a thinker more readily than Bouillaud, thanks to the bewitching charm of his utterance. Just now he was leaning upon the desk listening attentively to Didelod. The member for Lehrange was explaining the peculiar conditions of industrial development on the German frontier:

"To incite workmen to come out on strike when foreign competition makes the stoppage of work utterly futile is to commit a social crime. Understand me well, any pressure brought to bear on masters in my position is useless. By giving a single order I escape the iron law which suspension of work imposes on every manufacturing business. I have only to telephone to Reismann; my orders will be passed over to Steingel and executed there. I merely close my establishment, put out the fires, and let my workmen fold their arms. After a fortnight they will either be dying of hunger or have committed an assault of some kind. Now I don't want this to happen, for I have a sincere love and esteem for the working classes. I am in the habit of treating them well, and am quite prepared to improve their present condition, so far as in me lies. Anything compatible with the effective progress of the works I am ready not only to grant, but even to offer on my own initiative. This

is well known, and for this reason I cannot understand the present movement of which I am informed, and which I see every hour drawing nearer a crisis."

Shaking his head, Bouillaud said:

"The whole thing is exclusively political in its nature. On the journey here I was travelling with Stylb, who made no attempt to conceal the fact from me."

"But why does not Stylb come to see me? We have been on the most friendly terms for the past ten years. . . . Does he want to do me an injury?"

"He does not want to do himself one. Were he to come to see you, he would at once be regarded as having been bought over by the enemy."

"For having called on me, a Socialist deputy? Am I under suspicion? Have things really come to this pass?"

"My dear Didelod, the Revolution is like Saturn, she devours her own children. Everybody is under suspicion. One who has been in the vanguard of the party for years is rudely thrust aside by some one bolder or more violent, and disappears from the ranks, the victim of a higher bid in the political market. That is the evil from which a Socialistic system suffers. It is so free and open that any one may leap to the front, with any kind of foolish promises. If the people listen to him and vote in his favour, in a moment he is at the head of all the former favourites and has become master of the situation."

"But that is the most unexampled ingratitude!"

"Democracies have every right, especially the right to ingratitude. Do you think it is for them that efforts are made? Nothing of the kind; it is for one-

self. You may tell the masses they are great and just and possessed of every virtue, but what you really mean is that you wish them to hand over power to you that you may rule them. So long as the people hear only flattering words, all goes well; but once they understand their meaning, then they break their idol and pass to another. In this way they are everlastingly being deceived. It would be too much to expect gratitude from them."

"So you do not believe in disinterestedness, my dear Bouillaud?"

"No more than I believe in virtue."

"You think that I, to take an example, who have spent the whole of my life in working amongst my men. . . ."

"Mere ambition."

"Then what of you?"

Bouillaud looked up. A slight blush had spread over his face, followed immediately by a smile.

"I? My dear Didelod, I am the son of a provincial town clerk, and received a foundation scholarship in the small school close to which I was born. I began my career by pleading before the justice of the peace for the peasants of the district, who gave me ten francs for each case. Then I made my appearance in the courts. For years I have known the meaning of poverty, having neither socks to put into my boots nor a sufficiency of food. I maintained a character for unimpeachable integrity, although opportunities of undertaking very shady cases were not lacking. I suffered the better to ensure my future success. And I assure you, now that I have set my foot on the first steps of the ladder leading to success, you would have

to take my life before you could induce me to come down. I have made a study of men in their very inmost selves, and I know what is to be expected of them in the domains of cowardice and concupiscence. I will make them move about on my chess-board like pawns in the game I am playing with destiny. You wanted to know what I am; I have told you, without concealing anything."

In startled surprise M. Didelod sat silent for a few moments, then he said:

"What a power you have within you, Bouillaud! If you are not broken to pieces on the way, you will go far! Ah! I guessed it was so, after all, and I placed the utmost reliance upon you, as being the best man in our party. My disappearance would matter little, if only I could place the means I have at disposal into the hands of such a man as you are."

"You would not disappear, Didelod," said Bouillaud, with a smile. "I would use my best endeavours to back you up."

"Ah! if things depended only on myself," exclaimed the member for Lehrange, "we should speedily come to an agreement. The plans I had formed with the object of bringing you into my family are dearer to me than ever. I care nothing for your starting-point; I see only the goal you are marching towards. You are indeed the son-in-law of my choice. . . . But there are my wife and daughter to be considered. . . . That is the reason I have asked you to come to Badonviller. In the struggle now beginning your authority and eloquence will find opportunities for play; you will be able to show yourself to the best advantage.

Now come along to my house. I will explain your presence as due to the trouble in the district, and that you have been chosen as arbitrator between the men on strike and masters. You make your appearance there as the controller of affairs. If you are skilful, you will carry through the business of the party and your own at the same time. For my part, I am wholly at your disposal, and quite disposed to give you my daughter's hand in marriage."

"On condition I obtain her consent. Good; I will try me best."

"Now to return to the political situation. . . ."

"Which is to serve me as a spring-board. Well, I have to inform you that your men will be out on strike to-morrow."

"At Lehrange? After the explanations I have just given you? My workmen must have gone mad!"

"They don't trouble to reason things out, they just do as they are told. You are well aware how things go; it is your seat in the Chamber which is wanted."

"By whom?"

"By Stylb."

"Dare he think of it?"

"He told me this morning."

"He will not succeed."

"That's by no means certain!"

"Though I were to buy over all the electors? . . ."

"The very thing we reproach our opponents for doing!"

"It would be stupid not to imitate them!"

"There is something better than that to try. Rely on me. . . ."

"Ah! Bouillaur, you will be my Providence!"

"There is no such thing as Providence! There is only the knowledge of how to do things!"

"Call it what you like, provided it succeeds. . . ."

"That's what they say who are determined to succeed at all costs!"

"What a terrible fellow you are!"

"Why play the hypocrite? Whom do you deceive? Neither yourself nor any one else."

"So now we are agreed, are we not?" asked the member for Lehrange, holding out his hand to Bouillaud.

The latter looked Didelod straight in the face, then, slightly touching the other's hand with his forefingers, said:

"That depends altogether on Mlle. Didelod."

"Yes, yes. Now come to lunch at Badonviller."

Rising to his feet, he made way for Bouillaud to pass first; then he led him to the carriage standing in the courtyard.

"Jump up, my dear Bouillaud."

After the skirmish in front of the Chevert barracks events had succeeded one another with lightning rapidity. The workmen, exasperated by the dragoon charge, had made their way through the streets, shouting revolt on every hand. The police-station had been taken by assault and Tournemarie set free. No sooner was he at liberty than the delegate had made his way homewards. He was eager to be brought face to face with his daughter. It was nearly eight o'clock when he entered the kitchen where his wife and two daughters, after waiting some considerable time, had finally seated themselves at table. Tournemarie threw his cap

on to the mantelpiece, and said brutally, in answer to his wife's welcome greeting:

"Why did you wait for me? It's a miracle I am here instead of being under lock and key."

With a furious gesture he pointed to his daughter:

"Has that viper told you nothing?" he asked.

"What was there for her to tell me?"

He seized Hortense by the arm and shook her violently. Terrified, the mother asked:

"Explain yourself, Tournemarie. Where can she have been for you to fly into such a temper?"

"To her lover's. Look at her!"

Pale and upright as she stood against the wall, Hortense flashed a look of hatred on her father. Terrified, her mother walked up to her.

"Come, my child, you see how troubled and uneasy I am. Don't leave me in such torture when you can put an end to it with a single word. . . . What! you say nothing? Do I deserve to be treated in this fashion?"

Sinking on to a chair, she burst into tears.

"You? No!" said the young girl sorrowfully. "Had there been only you in the house there would have been nothing to complain of!"

"You'll be saying next," exclaimed Tournemarie, "that it is my fault!"

"I do say it!" replied Hortense boldly. "It is your fault! I am quite tired of pampering your idleness, of working myself to death, from morning till night, whilst you fold your arms and do nothing. Whilst I am ruining my eyes with sewing you are regaling your friends at 'The Pineapple.' All the money you receive from the strike fund is spent in

drink, whilst mother and I toil and slave to keep the house going. I don't see why I should not do as I please when you take things so easily. After all, why should I not love some one?"

"Yes, some one in uniform!"

"You have no right to say anything after trying to murder him!"

"To murder him!" exclaimed the mother, terror-struck.

"Yes, to murder him!" jeered Hortense. "And he was tipsy into the bargain! At all events, if he was not, I scarcely think he would have shown himself so stupid as to make all that row, and that to no purpose. Lucky he did not get his back broken for his pains!"

"You're sorry, aren't you?"

"I. How could it affect me?"

"Suppose your father had been killed?"

"Is he a father in any way? How has he always shown his authority over me? By the cuffs and blows he has given me ever since I was born? Fine rights indeed! And what kind of example has he set me? An example of idleness, of drunkenness, and bad conduct generally. Did he even have me baptized? No, I am of no more importance than our neighbour's dog! I have received no religious or moral training of any kind; nor have I ever heard talk of anything else than having a good time here, because there is nothing to hope for hereafter. Well, then, I am doing nothing more than I have been taught to do. Life does not last for ever, as father says, and those drinking friends of his."

"Hortense!" groaned her mother, "you are breaking my heart!"

"Dear mother," said the young girl, "it is not for you that I am talking in this strain. You are a victim along with myself, that I know well enough. I am not bad at heart, and I would have done anything rather than give you pain, but then one feels so unhappy, so down-hearted, you see on every hand so many wicked people who are successful in everything they do, that finally a spirit of revolt comes over you, and the virtue of resignation becomes too much for you. Then a scene of happiness passes before your eyes, you are afraid of losing it, so you snatch hold of it before it passes away. Pardon me if I have given you pain, dear mother; that is the only thing that causes me regret."

"So that is what you think, is it? Well, be good enough to quit the house, and that at once!" exclaimed Tournemarie. "I will not keep in it such a baggage as you are any longer."

"And who is pay the butcher and the baker tomorrow?" asked the young girl bitterly. "Quit the house indeed! An easy thing to say, but what then? Is it you who will bring the money in? You, M. Tournemarie, public orator and strike-manufacturer! If we are to rely upon you for food, we had better whip the cat a bit, in familiar language!"

"Will you hold your tongue, you viper?"

"Oh! you'll not make me afraid. Besides, you left your revolver at the police-station!"

"You will find yourself on the floor in a moment!"

"It would tire you too much to make the effort!"

"Hortense!" interrupted the mother, "will you obey me? Not another word!"

"Very well, mother, I will say nothing more."

"Come, Tournemarie, don't be so hard upon her;

there is nothing to be gained by violence. Sit down now; dinner is ready, and it is long past the hour."

With a surly look, Tournemarie drew up his chair. Then, his wife having brought in the soup, the pleasing odour mounted to his nostrils and his features relaxed. The dinner began in perfect silence.

The following morning, at the very hour when Bouillaud was engaged with M. Didelod in the sub-prefect's office, Hortense left her work and went to call upon Lieutenant Maubrun. After the stormy scene of the previous night she no longer took any precautions and walked rapidly along. She was afraid she would not find him at home, though well aware that he was not on duty. There had been a rumour throughout the town that the dragoons were confined to the barracks. The small garden door was open and Chauvin was grooming a horse in the yard, on seeing the young girl enter he dropped his brush, gave a military salute, and said:

"The lieutenant has just come in, mademoiselle, though I do not think he will stay for lunch."

With a smile and a nod, Hortense thanked the orderly and entered the house. Maubrun, in uniform, ran to meet her, pressing her to his breast.

"Well, darling, how are you this morning? Have you time to stay a little?"

"I have an hour to spare."

He led the way to a room on the ground-floor, which he used as a study. Paintings and weapons of different kinds adorned the walls, which were hung with old tapestry. The rest of the furniture consisted of a bookcase, a few large arm-chairs, and a huge writing-table.

"Sit down, love," said Maubrun, "and tell me what has happened."

"My interview with father last night was anything but a pleasant one. He was furious, and would have beaten me, had he dared!"

"Did he calm down in the end?"

"Yes, when he came to understand that he would not be prosecuted."

"I had no end of difficulty in bringing matters to a quiet termination. The constable would not bate an inch. It was useless for me to say that I refused to lodge a complaint, that I did not know what the trouble was about, and that your father had not fired at me; there were the witnesses, the policeman, the revolver! 'I assure you he fired in the air,' I said. 'He wished to draw me from the house, and made an uproar in the garden. These witnesses of yours have seen nothing at all!' Finally, the inevitable, the omnipotent Didelod intervened, and he, in his capacity as mayor and Member of the Chamber respectively, gave stringent orders to the police authorities. . . . In a word, the matter will be carried no further. All the same, though personally we need entertain no further difficulty, things are going very badly for every one else. Last night the men on strike insulted the barracks, pulling down the flag and tearing it into shreds. The soldiers are furious; we have had to keep them within bounds to avoid trouble in the streets. Nor will this confinement to barracks tend to restore them to good humour. There are sword-thrusts and cuts in the air, I can tell you. And we officers take it keenly to heart, if we are supposed to strike down our own countrymen, beneath the very

eyes of the Germans, watching us from over the frontier."

"How kind-hearted you are, dear Edouard. It is such a relief for me to be with you now; you are so different from the people amongst whom I live."

"They are very good folk, my dear girl, though not very happy that is all. You must show yourself very indulgent and look for excuses for them. You see, so many foolish things are told them, that, in the long run, their judgment becomes warped. They are informed that one can become wealthy without working, that elections are the stepping-stones to every kind of reform, and that universal adult suffrage carries with it the right to say and do anything. What, do you expect, will hold them back when they see these miracles being realised in the case of some among them? Then they lose all heart for work, their disposition becomes soured, and they call upon a revolution to overthrow the present social state of things. No one ever speaks to them of acquiring by their own exertions, but only of taking for themselves. Those possessed of anything are denounced as thieves and robbers. Consequently, they think they have the right to plunder them, without reflecting that such action would in itself be robbery. The worst of it all is that no trouble is taken nowadays to enlighten one's conscience, all efforts are directed to stir up one's appetites and desires. So you see, society is reverting to a condition of barbarism and brutality."

Hortense listened to Maubrun as he spoke, with a look of rapture in her smiling face.

"How clearly I see that everything you tell me is true. No one has ever spoken to me in this strain before, and yet these are things I might have learnt

with the greatest advantage. Is it your religion that teaches you all this?"

"You little savage, for you are as ignorant as one," said Maubrun gaily, "it is religion that gives us principles of morality; but education, or instruction, does the same thing also."

"Then why is it not spoken of in our day schools?"

"Ah! why, indeed, my child? That is a very serious question, which would take me some time to explain to you. But are you very anxious for us to talk about such serious matters just now?"

He drew her to his breast and tenderly kissed her. She lifted her blue eyes up to his, and said in rather a vexed tone of voice:

"You think I am silly and stupid, don't you, and it bores you to teach me? How I should like to know the things you know, for then I feel I should be nearer you."

Laughingly he replied:

"What a strange schoolmaster you would have! To think of you taking lessons from a lieutenant of dragoons!"

With a shake of the head she said:

"Don't scoff at me, Edouard, but I should like to practice your religion."

"Very well! you must go and talk the matter over with the priest at Lehrange or one of his assistants. He will be only too glad to give you instruction. But what will they say of this at home?"

"Ah! I don't care what they say! Mother, at all events, would approve of my action. I feel that if only I could pray to God, I should not be so sad and unhappy. In the books I read, the newspaper serials

my friends lend me, all of a noble and honest nature have religious sentiments which sustain them in the trials and difficulties of life. Is it really so, or are these the inventions of novelists, merely for the purpose of interesting the reader?"

"No, these are not inventions, they are truth itself. For centuries past all good and worthy people have been in the habit of praying to Heaven for help in their trials. Religion is a great comfort. I, you know, am not what you would call a pious sort of person, and scarcely ever attend Mass. Still, on critical occasions my thoughts have always turned to God, to ask Him to grant me hope and courage."

"Tell be about one of them."

The lieutenant smiled and, drawing the young girl nearer to him, said:

"Two years ago I was in a regiment of horse-chasseurs, at Tlemcen, in Africa, when a disturbance took place away in the south. The Bou-Salem, a body of very fierce, daring Arabs, had made a raid on those tribes which were subject to our sway. We made a column and, with sixteen men under me, I was sent forward to reconnoitre. We were a considerable distance ahead of the main body, when we were stopped by nightfall, close to a well, near which was a marabout. Here I billeted my small band. About two in the morning, as I was watching, for in such cases the leader must always be on the alert, a shot was fired, and the sentry fell back, with the shout: 'The Arabs!' In a moment every soldier was on his feet, rifle in hand. The moon was shining gloriously, so that one could see almost as well as in full daylight. From the roof of the marabout I as-

certained that we were surrounded by a considerable body of the enemy."

'How many?"

"Two hundred, at the very lowest figure. Without any preliminary they opened fire. The balls rattled on the stone wall. We had exactly fifty cartridges each man. Had we returned the fire, after a quarter of an hour's rapid shooting we should have been reduced to the extremity of having to defend ourselves with the sword. We had to wait until we were assailed before making use of our rifles."

"What happened then?"

"The Arabs flung themselves on the marabout, intent on taking it by assault. Four times they returned to the charge, leaving behind on the ground some of their men after each attempt. I saw our supply of ammunition grow less and less. Three of my men were wounded, one was killed outright. There were only twelve of us left in a condition for continuing the struggle, and I said to myself: 'If our comrades do not hear the firing and come to our help, when the sun rises we shall be at the mercy of the enemy, and have to mount our horses and force our way through them. How many will rejoin the main body, how many be left stretched on the sand?' It is at such a time as this, you see, my dear Hortense, that you feel how helpless you are, and look above to ask for strength to do your duty. Beneath that clear, star-lit sky a feeling of certainty came to me that nothing in life is governed by chance or hazard, and that some higher will controls our destinies. Crushed by the immensity of this power, and conscious of my own feebleness, I prayed, as a little child would do."

"And what then, dear Edouard?"

"My prayer was heard, as you see, for I am here by your side."

"Did your friends come to the rescue?"

"Yes, at daybreak."

"And those dreadful Arabs?"

"They disappeared like a flock of birds."

"And were you not congratulated by your superior officers?"

"Not at all. What I had done was a very simple matter. The wounded were attended to and the dead man buried. The object of our march, from that time, was speedily brought to a successful termination."

"All the same, it was entirely due to you!"

"Oh! You want to set me up as a hero, do you?"

"Don't jest with me, but I think you are one."

"Well, do so, if it pleases you. But time is passing, my dear girl; I must return to barracks."

"Are you obliged to go back?"

"Certainly. Our men are confined within walls, and we must stay with them."

"I feel heart-broken at the idea of your leaving me. At all events, you run no danger, I hope?"

"What danger? We are not going into war."

"That is so; but suppose the men out of work attack you, as they did last night?"

"We shall have to see what the horses' hoofs can do."

"But what if they fire upon you?"

"Why should they fire?"

"Can any one tell? An evil-disposed person cannot always give a reason for what he does."

"Tut! you must not think of it. Besides, we must do our duty."

"So you are sending me away?"

"I regret the necessity."

"When shall I see you again?"

"To-morrow, if you can come, at the same hour."

"I will arrange to do so. Well, then, I'm off."

Flinging her arms round the lieutenant's neck, she gave him a prolonged kiss. Her eyes were brimming with tears she could not hold back. With a smile, he gently asked:

"Come, now, little stupid! what does all this mean?"

Forcing herself to smile, she wiped away the tears and said resolutely:

"You are right; I am stupid. Good-bye for the present."

Accompanied by him to the small garden gate, she disappeared.

. . . . .

In the large dining-room of Badonviller lunch was just finishing. Bouillaud, seated at Mme. Didelod's right, had shown himself a brilliant conversationalist. The member for Lehrange was in the seventh heaven of delight; he seemed all the time to be saying to his wife and children:

"There, now! You see what a splendid fellow he is. I did not deceive you in what I told you of him."

Bouillaud was finishing a speech, beautifully delivered, on the subject of democracy, glorifying the advent to power of the Socialists. It was Didelod's favourite subject, the one which, more than any other, was calculated to exasperate his wife and rouse vehement protests from Laurence and Maurice. On this occasion, however, no one replied, all opposition to the new ideas and opinions seemed to have been

crushed down. Didelod began to get afraid; the victory was too complete. He reflected to himself: "Is it possible that Bouillaud's eloquence has performed the miracle of forcing my family to accept opinions which are so dear to me No! Captivating though it be, it has not effected such a result in a moment. There is some snare or other lurking beneath this appearance of resignation. Something is in preparation which will enable any reactionary family to raise their flag. If Bouillaud is shrewd, as I feel certain he is, he will attach no importance to it, but will laugh down the silly ramblings of my wife and son. At all events, Laurence, who is a very intelligent girl, cannot possibly avoid remarking the difference between Bouillaud and young De Berlier. They are as different from one another as day and night."

On rising from the meal they passed into the *salon*. Bouillaud, who was really very polite and ceremonious, offered his arm to Mme. Didelod, and the member for Lehrange followed with his son and daughter. He could not refrain from asking them:

"Well! what do you think of him?"

"Oh! he is just what I expected to find him," said Maurice; "a very interesting arguer and an eloquent rhetorician. His speeches in the Chamber give a very faithful idea of what he must be in private life —an excellent talking-machine."

"He is more than that," said Laurence. "There is really wit and sparkle in his thoughts, and he is wonderfully charming in his way of expressing himself. I can well understand what an influence he must exercise over his listeners."

"Ah! you, at any rate, will not allow yourself to

be prejudiced against him!" exclaimed Didelod in a pleased tone of voice.

He drew near the table, on which coffee had been served, and, taking up a box of cigars, held it out to his guest. The latter gave a slight wave of the hand in token of refusal; whereupon Didelod said:

"You may smoke anwyhere here, my dear fellow."

The young deputy still refused, as he said smilingly:

"Many thanks, I have given up smoking."

"Ah! my dear Bouillaud, you scarcely eat anything, you do not drink, you have given up smoking. . . ."

"Scarcely what one expects of a revolutionist, is it?"

"It is said that Robespierre was extremely sober," remarked Mme. Didelod coldly.

"Ah! madame," said Bouillaud, with a laugh. "Marat was even more so! Nowadays, however, labels, classings, and qualifications have altogether fallen into disfavour, as they are well known to be so false. The formulae and superstitions of the past have been abandoned, everything is in process of evolution, of transformation. Before long the nobility will be nothing more than an historic memory. A man will be worth only what he is in himself, his social standing will be fixed by his work. The only superiority recognised will be that of capacity. And this is the case to such an extent that the youth of our times, unlike those of the past, who were quite satisfied with being born with a silver spoon in their mouth, and squandering their fortunes as fast as they could, show themselves eager to make good use of their material and intellectual capital by subsidising

business undertakings, when they do not establish such on their own account. The tradition of living without doing anything is in a parlous condition, in these days, like every other tradition; I am certain that your son is preparing to work, like his father, who also worked, following the example of his own father."

"Oh! monsieur," said Maurice, who up to this point had not opened his mouth. "Had my father left me free to follow my own inclination, I should have become a soldier. I know of no profession more noble or attractive, for it is wholly based on a tradition which cannot be abolished without France ceasing to be: that of patriotism and honour."

"The deuce!" exclaimed Bouillaud, looking at Didelod. "Well, if that is not the spirit of Nationalism, I don't know what is!"

Before the member for Lehrange could open his mouth to reply Laurence had risen to her feet, and, with a toss of her beautiful fair hair, added with a laugh:

"Father has more than one child holding such sentiments, he has a pair."

"What, mademoiselle, you, too?"

"Yes, I, too. You see, we are far from being of one mind on the matter."

As she spoke she looked at Bouillaud with so scoffing an expression that the young deputy was quite startled, though he was not a man to be easily put out. In a tone of assurance which brought a smile into her mother's face and a look of alarm and vexation into that of her father's, Mme. Didelod continued:

"You have given us a lecture on the subject of the

future of democracy, with a degree of art and eloquence which has really dazzled us. You have, however, undertaken the task of converting those whose minds are made up. We see too clearly the consequences of the regime you advocate to admit of the possibility of our being convinced by your arguments. Here in Badonviller, in the new generation of Didelots, we insist, more than all else, on principles of order and authority; we have a horror of that anarchy to which the admirable theories you have just been developing for us lead, by a straight path, in practical life. Of course, we do not want to revert to the times of Louis XIV. Still, we claim to see liberty of thought respected by those who have been asking for it for over a hundred years, and who have come into power only to stifle and destroy it. My brother and I, monsieur, are on the threshold of life; we shall certainly, each of us, found a new family. In all probability we shall have children. Well, then, the thought that we shall not have the right to have them educated and brought up in the manner and by the people that we please appears intolerable to us. Without going so far, however, let us take an example nearer at hand. The threat is held out that we shall no longer have Mass on Sundays at Badonviller, because the parish is too poor to pay for a priest, and my father, the member for Lehrange, will regard it as his duty to refrain from subsidising a poor man whom he has known for twenty years, and all this solely with the object of pleasing the members of his party. So my mother and myself, along with my brother, will be forced to go to the church in the small village of Steingel, on the other side of the frontier. Such is the result of an uncompromising attitude.

Very well, we refuse to accept such a situation, which utterly fills us with abhorrence, for it forces us to ask ourselves the question whether we should not have been happier and more free by becoming German than by remaining French."

"Ah! mademoiselle!"

Laurence smiled as she asked:

"Then you protest? For what reason Of necessity you must be an Internationalist, so you cannot charge me with lack of patriotism."

"I will not go so far, mademoiselle," remarked Bouillaud, a tone of sadness suddenly appearing in his voice. "I will confine myself to analysing the mournful lament springing up in the heart of a fervent believer such as you are, along with many others of the mothers and daughters of France, a lament, too, which fills me with profound sadness. And this is the result of our party struggles! Believe me, the simple and touching regret you have just given evidence of, at the thought that your village church will be left empty and desolate, weighs more heavily on my mind than all the emphatic protests of clerical orators. But, after all, what can we do? For centuries past we have been engaged in a struggle against the Church; we see no salvation for modern society in anything less than its destruction. Firmly convinced, as we are, of this necessity, can we abandon one of our most important reforms in order to spare the tears, however sincere, of a few pious souls? Alas! all evolution brings in its train loss and suffering. Those who have undertaken to bring about a social transformation must arm themselves stoutly against complaints and insults of every kind.

They must go forward without hesitating, with eyes fixed on the appointed goal, upheld by hope and a good conscience."

"That is just what I cannot bring my family to admit," said M. Didelod. "My wife . . ."

"Come now," interrupted Mme. Didelod, "you must do me the justice to acknowledge that so far I have allowed the children to speak, and have not made a single remark myself, though . . ."

"It is just the utter propriety of your attitude which is so irritating to me. Every hour of the day I feel that you are blaming me; I find my children in a state of open, intellectual revolt against me every moment of my life. Their mental condition is so different from mine that we do not seem to be speaking the same language or to belong to the same country. . . . In a word, I am looked upon as a tyrant, though I allow them to do everything they wish. They regard me as a despot, though I love them tenderly. . . ."

"All the same, we cannot become Socialists to please you, or call the Pope Monsieur Sarto, or even plain Sarto. We cannot refuse to give trousseaux to workmen's daughters who get married in church, or layettes to new-born infants when their parents take them to be baptized. It is useless for you to tar these actions over with the brush of politics; we cannot help looking upon them as monstrous and unworthy of us and of all those who have gone before, bearing our name, bequeathing us, along with a great fortune, obligations of every kind towards those with whom we come into contact. . . ."

"But I fulfil these obligations . . ." pro-

tested Didelod. "My charities are numerous and thriving. . . ."

"But they benefit only a few; it is politics that rule everywhere. . . . In order to receive any benefit from them, one must hold certain opinions. Poverty in itself does not constitute a right, one must also be orthodox. . . ."

"Surely you don't expect me to pension members of the clerical and reactionary parties!"

"You have no right to make distinctions! Humanity forbids such a course! If you make class distinctions in your charities, you act like a sectarian and show a very pronounced party spirit!"

"Maurice!" remonstrated the member for Lehrange, finding himself thus hard pressed by his son.

Turning to Bouillaud he remarked:

"Here you see a family in which peace and harmony have been destroyed by politics. Alas! it is a sad and lamentable picture of a France divided against itself!"

"Rushing headlong to ruin," said Maurice, "unless saved by a dictator!"

"Who, wretched child? Who?" moaned Didelod.

"I've no idea; but he will show himself. Who knows Perhaps it will be M. Bouillard, with his eloquence so powerful in stirring up the masses, and his cold, clear-thinking mind, skilful in political combinations."

Bouillard smiled as he bowed:

"You flatter at the same time that you discredit me. I am incapable of failing in my duty as a Republican by restoring personal power to my own benefit."

"For the benefit of your country," replied Maurice. "That would not be failing in your duty as a Republican. All that would be needed would be to modify the constitution, and have the President of the Republic elected by universal adult suffrage, as is done in America and in Switzerland. . . . In a moment the whole situation would be changed; the principle of authority would be restored. Members of the Cabinet would cease to be responsible and would not be appointed from either House. The result would be a greater stability in administration."

"And what then?" questioned Bouillard curiously.

"That is all. By means of this simple change the country would cease to be the prey of intriguers and profit-mongers. Order would be restored everywhere. Finally, we should have something else than a government of rioters, whose only concern is to shake public prosperity instead of ensuring it."

"Indeed! That is nothing else than the doctrine of the plebiscite," said Bouillard, with a smile. "Be assured, young man, I shall never accept such a government."

"Why?"

"Because the very day after it has been elected two thousand individuals, my friends and comrades, the life and nerve of the Republican party, would have to be transported."

"Yes, shareholders in the bank of Le Bloc and Co."

"Hush!" said Bouillard. "Your father has a large holding in that bank."

"My father!" protested Maurice vigorously.

"No! thank Heaven! You are mistaken. He is only a sleeping partner, and therefore a dupe. Fortunately for the honour of the family, he risks nothing more than loss of money!"

M. Didelod said to his guest, with a shrug of the shoulders:

"Attach no more importance than it deserves to such nonsense. Time will bring balance into the brain of this young man. He is neither a fool nor evil-disposed; the only thing is he does not see clearly. The future alone will open his eyes. Now, if you like, we will make our way towards the works."

"I am at your disposal."

He turned to Mme. Didelod and her children, and, making a prolonged bow with the utmost grace, said:

"I hope you will have the goodness to bear no grudge against me for being quite frank and sincere. I should have been ashamed to disguise my opinions from you; besides, it has had the advantage of making yours known to me. I am far from attaching little importance to them; it is my custom to feel the utmost respect for opinions that are disinterested, such as yours are, I am absolutely certain, since your sole object is to do good."

"Shall we have the pleasure of seeing you at dinner this evening?" asked Mme. Didelod.

"Most willingly, madame," said the Socialist deputy. "It will afford me another opportunity of breaking a few more lances with your son and paying homage to the keen intellect of Mlle. Didelod."

The two men went out into the hall, and, as they

walked along to the carriage which was to drive them to Lehrange, the manufacturer said to Bouillard:

"I hope you will not take seriously the prattlings of these youngsters?"

"My dear fellow, what else can I do? They have both told me only what they were determined I should know: to wit, that there is an insurmountable precipice between their ideas, feelings and hopes and my own. Listen to me: Mlle. Didelod, who is an absolute aristocrat, will never place her proud hand in the proletarian paw of Citizen Bouillaud, and you are a sorry observer if you are under the slightest illusion in this matter."

"But, you see, my dear Bouillaud," interrupted Didelod.

"No! Besides, your children are quite right, for in your position, with your fortune, your family and social attachments, you cannot help belonging to the gentry; in association with the democracy, you are going out of your sphere. Sooner or later rupture will take place between our party and yourself; there is nothing in common between us. We are an army, on the march towards the conquest of those things we are without—wealth and power. It is yourself and men like you who are in possession of what we want to take. So, you see, it is your son and daughter who are right, and yourself who are wrong."

"I will never acknowledge it."

"Time will doubtless open your eyes."

They continued their journey.

CHAPTER VI

FIRST BLOOD

THE demonstration by the strikers, in front of the Chevert barracks, the most notable episodes of which had been the tearing down of the flag and the rough treatment of the constable, had excited the populace to the highest degree. After the charge of the dragoons, who had swept them aside into the neighbouring streets, they had begun to reflect how mild the repression had been, after all; the consequence being that their ardour had redoubled. Stylb had harangued them in the open street. Absent during all the disturbance, this rouser of the passions of the mob had again appeared on the scene, to stir up revolt anew. Beneath the roof of the old market, now deserted, he moved up and down, in the midst of the four or five hundred idlers shrieking vengeance without having anything to avenge, and, in the frenzied excitement, tossing about their hands, armed with threatening bludgeons.

"You have nothing to fear from the troops," Stylb was saying. "You saw that the officers dare not ask them to strike, for they are well aware that the balls might miss their aim. Do not hesitate, comrades, forward, have no fear. The soldiers, themselves sprung from the people, will not strike down the people. They are more likely to hold up their rifle-stocks in the air and make common cause

with you. Is it their business to guard the safes of the gentry, your masters, who are quaking with fear, before the justice of your claims? Learn to know your true friends, your sincere defenders. Where is that famous democrat of Lehrange, who cannot be eloquent enough in upholding the interests of the workers, whilst all the time he tyrannises over them as much as, even more than, any one? Where is Citizen Didelod, that out-and-out Socialist, who is always making appeal to the proletariat? He is at his works, in the office, making up his accounts, in an endeavour to earn as much as possible on the work produced by the efforts of your companions in wretchedness and poverty. And yet he had promised to effect the capitulation of Neumans if you would appoint him arbiter. What was the result? Nothing! He came to terms with the employer against the men, for wolves do not devour one another; instead of defending, he has betrayed you."

"Down with Didelod!" howled the mob. "He is an exploiter!"

"Possessed of his forty millions, what do your needs and sufferings matter to him With the capital he unjustly holds back each of you could live in ease and plenty for the rest of your lives. Whilst he lives in a château which would lodge you all with the utmost ease, your wives and children are penned up in narrow, unhealthy rooms. He has servants dressed like the sub-prefect and as insolent as the tax-collector. . . ."

"Ah! Ah! hooted the crowd, grinning with rage and hatred.

"Now, comrades, is it right that an individual

should have all and the people, as a collective body, nothing? Do you think that a system of government based on so selfish a foundation is the one you ought to accept? That idea of property which concentrates riches in the hands of one man, and gives what is superfluous to the individual, whilst all the time the masses are lacking the necessaries of life, is a social monstrosity. Is it admissible that certain persons should roll in abundance whilst others toil in wretchedness and poverty? And yet, this is what you may see around you every day. What can you expect from a gentry glutted with every kind of luxury Optional benefits, which are nothing less than alms! Is that what you want?"

"No! No! Down with the sleek and idle exploiters!"

"Your companions in toil, your brothers in poverty alone are one with you, ready to help you. The workman has nothing to expect from the master, but he may rely on his fellow-worker. Whilst Didelod and Neumans were in league to deceive you, do you know what the smiths of Lehrange were doing?"

"Yes, they were declaring for us!"

"Better than that, they were compromising themselves in the eyes of their all-powerful engineers, by allowing the furnaces to become extinguished, with the object of bringing the works to a standstill. . . ."

"On with the strike! Our comrades at Lehrange must stop work!"

"They are waiting simply for you to interfere, then they will raise aloft the standard of their just demands! For forty years there has been no strike

in Lehrange. Didelod relies on the resignation and the submission of his hands. He has lulled their energy to sleep with his delusive favours. By means of his co-operative enterprises he has ruined local commerce, and by his sales, which are to be paid for by instalments, he has brought the workmen into debt, and thus tightened his hold upon him. Such a state of things is infamous! Not only does Didelod receive a revenue from his works, he also has a profit on everything sold in his shops. This man holds the working classes by the throat, strangling and robbing them, and yet he has the audacity to utter the word democracy, making game of us and throwing dust in our eyes by calling himself a Socialist!"

"Death to Didelod!"

"Confine yourselves to depriving him of his seat in the Chamber, that will be something gained. Refrain from placing in his hands rods for your own backs. Act as free men, not as the dull, cringing slaves of this exploiter, who mocks at your simplicity! His workmen only await the signal to join you. March on the works! Go to Lehrange! Beneath the folds of the red flag, brave this false democrat who lives by your labour and treats you like dogs!"

"Yes! Yes! On to Lehrange!"

The first few rows had already started and were forming a column, when Tournemarie flung himself into their midst.

"Where are you going in this way? Are you in a position to defend yourselves? Have you any weapons?"

"We don't need any!"

"Indeed! Do you think you are running no danger Have you forgotten how the dragoons charged you? Would you have allowed yourselves to be treated in that brutal fashion if you had had weapons?"

"No, indeed!"

'Do not commit a folly, comrades. I have just come from the hands of those villains, after firing my revolver on one of their chiefs! Go home and arm yourselves with whatever weapons you can lay hands on. Above all, gather together a larger crowd. Has a mere handful of men the slightest chance in a struggle with armed force? Let us meet again here in a mass to-morrow. And if this time our way is barred, we will defend ourselves. Should blood flow, let it fall back on the heads of the exploiters."

"He is right! Long live Tournemarie!"

"Well, friends, those who wish to join this movement must come here to-morrow. Your delegates will meet at 'The Pineapple,' and do everything necessary to ensure the success of the demonstration. For the present, go away quietly and rely on us."

With incredible docility the men dispersed, just as they had prepared to march at Stylb's orders. The latter, seated on a stone table, was pensively watching the insurgent masses as they broke up. Turning to Tournemarie, he asked:

"Why have you broken up this movement I took so much trouble to organise?"

"Because it would not have given the decisive result it will give to-morrow. You were premature, Stylb. It would have resulted in nothing but a slight

skirmish. I want a regular battle. Our Lehrange comrades will receive notice this evening, when they will prepare to join us; it is this fact that offers us every chance of success. Don't feel anxious. I have no wish to supplant you. You shall be our member. All I am thinking of is my revenge. That I intend to be as complete as possible. I have been insulted by an officer; my vengeance shall come through the army!"

"Very good! Come along to 'The Pineapple' and let us deliberate over this matter. It will not be easy to prove the better of Didelod in this district. He is sending for Bouillard to get him to work on the minds of the masses. The rumour goes that he would like to see him married to his daughter . . ."

"He will not see his desire fulfilled. The Badonviller ladies are far too aristocratic to welcome Bouillaud in their family."

"In that case Bouillaud will not long be on friendly terms with the member for Lehrange. He will come over to our side, once his interest tells him clearly that he must throw Didelod overboard."

After this judgment of the situation, reached with a cool and calculating clairvoyance, Stylb took Tournemarie by the arm, and together they followed the last of the strikers as they disappeared at the corner of the neighbouring streets. Darkness was beginning to fall; silence had descended upon the town of Lehrange. The overseer of the urban gasworks passed along, his tool-box flung over his shoulder. He was making his daily round, for M. Didelod had come to an understanding with Neumans whereby light should continue to be supplied throughout the

town. Seeing the two men, he called to them in a hoarse voice:

"Smash the lamps first; that will mean less work for me. We must do what we can for one another"

So saying, he lit the lamp overlooking the market-place and disappeared in the night.

The carriage which took Bouillaud and the member for Lehrange to the works first went along a charming pathway in the woods of Badonviller, and then ran on to the highway, on a level with the village. An undulating piece of ground, descending in the direction of the Verveille, separated the workmen's dwellings from the town. As the carriage emerged from the dale a body of men coming from the direction of Lehrange were seen making their way towards the works, marching along in the midst of a cloud of dust.

"Who are those people?" asked Bouillaud. "They are marching in tolerably fair order, though their gait is not very pacific. . . ."

At that moment the wind brought to their ears the confused sounds of the revolutionary song, "Ca-ira!"

"Ah! this is a rising of the people!" exclaimed Bouillaud. "Tell your coachman to whip up his horses. We must not be caught unawares on a public highway. They would make fine sport of us!"

The two horses hurried along the victoria at a more rapid pace, and the marching column disappeared at the bend of the road.

'Why are they going in the direction of Lehrange" murmured Didelod, sadly perturbed in mind.

"They want to win over your workmen. Are you sure of them?"

"Yesterday I could have answered in the affirmative."

"But to-day you cannot do so?"

"After what has taken place at the Lehrange Town Hall, I don't know what to think."

The carriage reached the works. The porter greeted M. Didelod in his usual fashion, and, on a sign from his master, approached the two men.

"Close all the gates and doors at once," said the mayor. "How many men have you at hand on whom you can rely implicitly?"

"There are the six day and the three night watchmen, monsieur. . . . But what does it all mean?"

The porter was a man of fifty, powerful-looking, with bristling hair and grey moustache. His resolute mien inspired confidence. He lived in the principal porter's lodge with his wife and two sons, both of whom were watchmen. M. Didelod looked good-naturedly at him and said:

"I am afraid the Lehrange people are preparing something underhand against the works. Summon the whole of the watch service."

The porter immediately rang a bell, and then, turning to his master, said:

"If I have orders to receive, shall I apply to the secretary?"

"No; apply to me. I am going into the office. Call me up on the telephone shortly."

"Very good, monsieur."

He began to shut the gates as Didelod and Bouil-

laud were making their way to the offices. Already in the distance the shouts and songs were heard with greater distinctness.

"Well, my dear Didelod," said Bouillaud, "this is a pleasure party I did not expect to see. You organise your surprises effectively!"

"Wait and see how things will turn out before reproaching me."

"I am not reproaching you in the least, for I am perfectly certain you had not the slightest suspicion of what now threatens us. It is just this which makes me feel uneasy on your behalf. It seems to me that you are in utter ignorance as to the thoughts and feelings of the workers in your district. Such a state of mind could not be improved upon if you want to commit a folly. Is the sub-prefect a man on whom you can rely?"

"I appointed him to his post."

"So he owes that to you. Now tell me if he has any expectations?"

"None, without my support."

"Then he will be on your side?"

"I don't need him. I maintain that the present state of affairs be left to itself, to be settled without interference."

"Suppose an outside element is introduced?"

"I will keep it out of the way."

"What of the mass of people following us?"

"They cannot enter here."

"Hum! Hum! What if your workmen go out to join them?"

A pallid look came over Didelod's face; he began to walk up and down the room. Then, as though he

had come to a sudden resolution, he pressed an electric knob. An office-boy appeared.

"Request all the heads of departments to come here immediately."

He looked at Bouillaud, who had quietly taken a seat.

"I am going to consult those who are brought into continual contact with the workmen. Through them we shall discover everything that can possibly be known."

"That is to say, very little. Either you may expect a surprise, or the matter has been badly organised. And yet, if Stylb has a hand in it, the probability is that there will be trouble."

"Stylb I will crush him. I am armed to the teeth against him."

"Money services?"

"Others as well."

Meanwhile the heads of the various departments had entered. The deputy summarily introduced them to Bouillaud. Briefly he questioned them:

"I have reason to believe that a body of men on strike from Lehrange is marching on the works. What information can you give me as to the disposition of the workmen?"

"The sheds are all in full work, monsieur," said the manager. "No act of insubordination has been reported."

"Have there been more requests than usual for an advance of wages?"

"No, monsieur," said the chief cashier.

"Are the foremen all at their posts?"

"All."

With a look of relief M. Didelod turned to Bouillaud:

"There, you see."

"I see that, for the moment, everything is in perfect order," remarked Bouillaud. "But we had better wait a little."

"The present situation, as you are doubtless aware," said the deputy, turning to the men standing there, "is very serious. Hold yourselves in readiness to act towards your men with the utmost firmness. I remain permanently in your midst. Ever since I have been at the head of affairs there has not been a single day's interruption of work; a strike is altogether unknown. I rely on you to aid me in the continuance of these happy traditions."

The men bowed and left the room. Bouillaud rubbed his hands with a look of approval.

"That was a fine little speech, Didelod. Really, you excel in a measured, familiar type of eloquence. Besides, you spoke as though you were a born master. Here is an instance of where your children are right in defending tradition. The tone of voice and expression of face you had a few moments ago could not be improvised at a moment's notice; one must be accustomed, almost born to it."

He was interrupted by the ringing of the telephone. Before Didelod had time to attend to it the door opened and Müller appeared.

"There is a crowd of men in front of the works, monsieur," he said. "They ask that the gates be opened, and if their request is not complied with, they threaten to force them open."

"Are your men at their posts?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Are they able to offer effective resistance?"

"I think so."

"Good! I will see for myself. You see, my dear Bouillaud, what is going on here. You could be of no assistance, and you might compromise yourself. Shall I order the coachmen to drive you back to Badonviller?"

"No need for so much ceremony, my dear Didelod. Just let me make my way out without falling in with the rioters. Once in the open country, I shall have no difficulty. I will make straight for Badonviller and inform them of what is taking place."

"Very well! Müller will show you the way."

"Keep a cool head on your shoulders," said Bouillaud. "Do not run counter to the men's opinions. You had better set to work in some other way. You may risk anything when you have dealings with peaceable individuals, but when you have to do with ranting fanatics, you must pretend that you are of their way of thinking; that's the only effective manner of taking the wind out of their sails. At all events, it is the method I adopt. Remember, too, that in politics promises are not binding. Good-bye for the present. I will see you again shortly."

He went out by the office door, just as Didelod appeared in the courtyard. Five or six hundred workmen, under the leadership of Tournemarie, were collected in the square, in front of the gates, shouting, "Down with the manager!" At each door stood two men, impassive, in watchmen's uniform. The manager of the technical department was walking about in the centre of the yard with five or six of his men, all

calm and determined. No sooner had the member for Lehrange appeared on the scene than a forward rush brought the crowd close up to the railings, which some of the youths began to climb. Simultaneously there arose a violent shout, immediately checked by Didelod, who came boldly forward to the very entrance of the works. Silence at once fell on the crowd, whom he thereupon addressed in loud, distinct tones:

"Why have you come here? To try and entice away my workmen? Is it in this way you interpret liberty to work? Who is your leader? I see M. Tournemarie at your head. . . . No one better than he knows how favourably disposed I am to the demands of the labouring classes. Why, then, are you shouting out, 'Down with the manager'? What business have you to interfere with my works? What can I do for you? I do not know you, nor is there any bond between us."

"You helped Neumans to hoodwink and make fools of us!" said a voice. "You are a master, so you always favour the masters, to the detriment of the workers!"

"Down with Didelod!" shrieked the men, in obedience to a signal. "Down with the exploiter! Tear up the gates!"

A rush was made on the principal door, but the watchman sprang forward and drove back the assailants. One of them caught hold of the legs of a small urchin who had perched on one of the stone pillars, and, after dragging him down, cuffed him soundly. This was a grave act of imprudence, by which the rioters immediately profited. A howl of fury re-

sponded to the cries of the lad, and at the same time a volley of stones hailed down upon the small body of employés, severely wounding the manager, whose forehead was covered with blood. The member for Lehrange had made up his mind that he would be calm, but on hearing the mob's shout of triumph at the sight of the injured manager, he lost his patience.

"You stupid beasts! You savages!" he exclaimed. "Back! or I will return blow for blow! You are aware that my men are armed! Beware if you defy me!"

A second volley of stones was the only answer. Didelod heard them as they whizzed past his ears, and a moment afterwards the window-panes fell on the ground with a crash. Maddened by their own violence, the strikers redoubled their shouts. An unexpected source of help came to them from the interior of the works, for through the doors of the sheds the workmen of Lehrange rushed forth, pushing one another aside in their eagerness as they shouted: "The strike! The strike!" In a moment Didelod and his staff were left behind and forced to retreat in the offices, whilst the open gates afforded entrance to the rioters, who scattered in every direction, breaking and pillaging all they came across. In the middle of the courtyard Stylb, mounted on the brink of a well, was beginning to speak, encouraged by the enthusiastic cheers of his companions, whilst sheets of paper, like a flock of white-plumaged birds, were being flung down in armfuls from the windows of the book-keeping department.

"Ah! the robbers!" exclaimed Didelod. "They are destroying the ledgers and account-books!"

At the same time a band of the wildest spirits amongst them began to knock violently at the door of the office into which the member for Lehrange and his managers had taken refuge. Stretched out on an arm-chair, in a half-fainting condition, lay M. Didelod, endeavouring to regain his wonted optimism. Suddenly a dense column of smoke rose above the cashier's office, followed a moment afterwards by tongues of vivid flame.

"They have set fire to the works!" exclaimed Didelod in stupefied amazement. "Fire! Can I believe my own eyes?"

"What is to be done, monsieur?"

"I will telephone to the police-station for help."

"They will send the police and a brigade of soldiers!"

"What! Soldiers!" repeated Didelod in despair. "All the same, I cannot leave my works to be set on fire and razed to the ground. . . . Yes, telephone. I have not the courage to do it!"

"It is quite unnecessary, father," said a calm, strong voice. "I have just come from Lehrange. The dragoons will be here in less than a quarter of an hour."

"Maurice!" exclaimed Didelod in tones of anguish as he clasped his son to his breast, "why have you come here?"

"Why have I come here?" repeated the young man in reassuring accents. "To expose myself to danger by your side, father; and to defend you, if need be!"

"How did you enter?"

"By one of the doors which fortunately was not guarded, and through which help will shortly reach

us. I have sent a man on horseback for this purpose. Keep up heart and resist these rascals to the end. Very soon now they will be dealt with as they deserve to be."

"How dreadful!" moaned Didelod. "To think that I should be forced to have recourse to violence, which I have so often disparaged and spoken against."

"Would you rather they burn down the works and kill us? Come! Since we are being attacked, we must defend ourselves!"

Cries of fury and rage were heard outside. Some desperate characters had seized hold of one of the watchmen. After tearing off his uniform, they thrust him in front of them, at arm's-length, in the direction of the flames. Maurice had rushed to the window, which was protected by iron bars, and was looking outside.

Suddenly he shouted:

"Come along! We cannot let them murder this man under our very eyes. Do not hesitate. Follow me!"

"Where are you going, Maurice?" exclaimed Didelod in despair.

"You will soon see!"

In an instant he had drawn aside the bolts of the door looking on to the courtyard. Followed by seven or eight strong, determined men, he rushed upon the band which was carrying off the watchman. There was a rapid collision; insults and a series of dull, hollow-sounding blows were exchanged, and several of the rioters were felled to the ground. Then the assailants beat a retreat, dragging with them the rescued watchman. The door closed behind them.

Maurice turned to his companions and said enthusiastically:

"Well done, gentlemen! Are we all here? Yes, there is no one missing! Better keep ourselves in readiness to repeat this, if necessary."

Didelod, with livid countenance, had sunk helpless into an arm-chair. Outside the noise and tumult had redoubled, and the office door was being shaken with the heavy charges of the men. Suddenly silence fell, a shrill trumpet call resounded, and the dragoons came trotting in by every entrance leading to the works. The rioters, driven back outside the railings, had left the space empty, and a line of horsemen now barred the entrance.

"Come along, father," said Maurice. "Help has come at last!"

"What are the soldiers going to do?" stammered Didelod. "I hope they are not preparing to charge!"

"Let them do whatever is necessary to protect you."

"I will have none of their protection. It will cause bloodshed on every hand."

Maurice took his father by the arm, pulled him to the window, and pointing to the smoke rising from the burning buildings:

"You must make your choice," he said firmly, "as to whether you will side with those who are doing their best to extinguish the fire or with those who have lit it. The time for empty talk is past; we find ourselves in the presence of important decisions, which have to be reached, and it is good that we should have the courage of our convictions. Pass through the ranks of these soldiers who are defending

you, and make your way to those rioters who are doing their worst against you. In the first place, you will see how they will receive you; in the second place, if you come to terms with them, you will have to do it at the cost of my life. . . ."

"Ah! What! . . ."

"Yes. On the threshold of the Didelod works, if they are bent on pulling them to the ground, there must be found, at any rate, one bearing our name, to take a final stand in defence of the family property. . ."

"Oh! Maurice!"

"Come, now, father! All these men about whose lives you are so solicitous are rogues and villains, who have not the least respect for your own life."

The arrival of the police inspector and of the officer in charge of the squadron cut short the conversation between father and son.

"The firemen have at last got the better of the flames, monsieur," said the inspector. "Your workmen have joined the strikers. What we now have to do is to clear the approaches to the works. . . ."

"That will be my business!" said the officer in charge.

"You do not intend to put these poor fellows to the sword, surely?" implored Didelod.

"No, I shall simply force them back. I am sure of my men; not a sword will leave its scabbard without my orders."

Turning to the inspector, Didelod said:

"I don't wish you to read the Riot Act or do anything of a nature to exasperate the crowd. Calm, conciliatory words will prove very effective. . . ."

"Very good, monsieur, I will use gentle methods,

since you wish it so. All the same, it will be at the risk of my life. . . ."

M. Didelod, accompanied by his son, followed the inspector. The whole breadth of the square in front of the works was occupied by horses and their riders. The trumpeters were stationed near the railings, and Lieutenant Maubrun, on foot—his horse and that of the commanding officer being held by Chauvin, Maubrun's orderly—was walking to and fro. He nodded to Maurice in friendly fashion, and turning to his superior officer, said:

"Things look very bad; they have hurled a volley of stones against the men, and three have been injured. . . . Perhaps you will allow us to have a trot round. . . ."

"Certainly, Maubrun, that's the very thing I was going to order you to do. Take twenty-five men with you and drive these rascals in the direction of Lehrange, at a slow trot. The inspector, along with a trumpeter, shall accompany you, in case of emergency. Do everything possible to prevent the necessity of extreme measures being taken. You know your orders: receive blows, but do not return them."

"A pleasant prospect!" said the lieutenant, with clenched teeth.

"Such are your orders."

"They shall be obeyed."

The lieutenant leaped to his saddle and, followed by a trumpeter and the inspector, passed in front of the troops, gave an order and, placing himself at the head of the detachment that had formed, slowly made his way in the direction of the mob, followed by his dragoons. A backward movement took place among

the rioters. Grouped on either side of the road, they shouted out insulting cries, and, as they had supplied themselves with projectiles from the piles of stones deposited here and there by navvies, they poured down a shower of missiles on the advancing platoon. Maubrun's horse, struck full on the forehead, suddenly reared and turned aside. The lieutenant brought it back into position, but found himself facing about and and close to the edge of the crowd. All at once, in the midst of the increasing threats and insults, a sharp report was heard. A thin line of smoke ascended into the air, and Maubrun, placing his hand to his side, staggered in his saddle. The horse, conscious of the lack of a controlling hand, galloped away in the direction of the platoon of dragoons, which it traversed at full speed, stopping only when it had reached the commanding officer's horse, which Chauvin still held by the bridle.

"Ah!" exclaimed the honest fellow as he saw Maubrun totter in the saddle.

He had just time to release the horse and receive the officer in his arms.

"Ah! what is it?" exclaimed the major, running up, with Didelod by his side.

A smile flickered on Maubrun's lips as he tried to sit upright before his superior officer. He said:

"I have received a shot without returning it. Your orders have been obeyed."

A stream of blood-stained foam mounted to his lips, a hiccuping sob shook his frame, and he lost consciousness.

"Help! Quick! . . ." exclaimed Maurice. "Run for the doctor. . . ."

The young man was carried to the office.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the commanding officer. "So this is the result of being too considerate. A sudden charge would have dispersed this band of rascals, and a few blows administered with the flat of the sword would have driven them back right to Lehrange without the slightest risk. Now, however, it may be necessary to put a few of them to the point of the sword. . . . Chauvin, go at once and ask how Lieutenant Maubrun is progressing. Come back and give me the news without a moment's delay."

"It is unnecessary to send the man on a useless errand, Major," said the manager, who came hurrying up, "Lieutenant Maubrun is dead."

"Dead?"

"He has been shot through the chest with a ball from a revolver."

A look of stupefaction was on every one's face. The major had turned extremely pale, whilst tears were flowing down Maurice's cheeks.

"Poor Maubrun! And such a fine fellow! . . . All on our account, too! . . . Ah! The assassins! Major will you not avenge him?"

"No, monsieur," said the soldier bitterly. "A rioter is sacred; we have no right to touch him. As regards soldiers, however, one need not trouble about them, you see. All the same, I do not intend to allow my horsemen to be massacred to no purpose."

Leaping briskly into his saddle, he galloped to the head of the platoon, on which stones continued to shower, and gave an order. The dragoons charged and dispersed the assailants, then, forming up in close order, they re-entered the courtyard, the gates of which were immediately closed upon them. As though satis-

fied with this retreat, the rioters formed themselves into a column, and, turning their backs on the Didelod works, made their way to Badonviller, through the woods. Insensible to all that was going on around, the member for Lehrange, accompanied by his son, was walking to and fro in front of the offices. The death of Lieutenant Maubrun had affected him in the most sensitive part of his nature.

This young man, who had just started before his very eyes, promising to refrain from violence, and who had fallen, murdered in this cowardly fashion, was, to him, the very incarnation of duty performed in a spirit of noble self-sacrifice. In the presence of this corpse he found it impossible to utter a word against military brutality. The blood which was flowing in order to protect his property, threatened by revolutionists, was that of one of those men he was in the habit of boycotting. The röles, however, had just been inverted in this lamentable fashion; the mob had shown themselves firebrands and assassins, the soldiery had been patient and heroic. And it was for him, Didelod, and in his presence, that such deeds had been accomplished. He was being driven distracted by the whole matter? What floods of irony they would pour on the Socialist manufacturer, who had been forced to accept the help of the army in order to defend himself against the claims of the workers! And what an opportunity of attacking him would be afforded the journals of the reactionist party, when the telegraph had conveyed to Paris the news of the events that had taken place in Lehrange!

After all, what else could he have done? Would they require him to submit to see his works burnt to the ground, for the people's sake and to please their

fancy? There appeared to be no doubt but that the rascals, under the leadership of Stylb, had intended to pillage and destroy the whole building. They had scarcely entered the place before a whole shed had become a prey to the flames. The till would soon have been broken in, and, but for the arrival of the dragoons . . . It was at this point that everything went wrong. Up to the time that the army interferred Didelod's part had been a magnificent one. He had stoutly withstood the fury of the mob; eloquently had he tried to calm the excited fanatics. Worthily had he upheld democratic traditions. These men who had come together in such numbers, shrieking and gesticulating, were only simple-minded, ignorant creatures, who had to be dealt with indulgently. And it was these very people he had allowed the cavalry to charge; stones had been hurled through the air, shots had been fired. Several had been injured, and one man killed. What an ineffaceable stain on his political honour! Above all, how very seriously his electoral standing had been weakened! Now he was beginning to see through the plans of his enemies; they were determined to make him suspected by the people, after having been looked upon as their benefactor for all these years. Ah! Stylb and Tournemarie should pay for this!

Such were his gloomy reflections, when the sub-manager came up to him:

"Work has come to a complete standstill in the sheds, monsieur. In my opinion it would be prudent to ring the bell and send away the workmen who remain. We have nothing good to expect from them. . . ."

At these well-considered words Didelod leapt to his feet; all his patience and uneasiness of mind seemed to have disappeared in a moment. He stood upright to his full height, and, looking down upon the sub-manager, he said in indignant accents:

"Summon all the foremen immediately, and tell them I am determined there shall be no strike here. Hitherto there has never been one, neither under my father's management nor under mine. And there shall not be one. If there is, the works shall be closed, and, whatever happens, whatever promises are made, I will keep them closed."

"What, monsieur, a lock-out?" asked the sub-manger, in amazement.

"Yes, monsieur, a lock-out! I will not have the law capriciously laid down in my works, in obedience to instructions from outside sources. It is no economic question that is involved. The workmen have not asked for an increase of wages, nor have they called for any modification in the rules and regulations. It is with a political object that they are joining strikers whose interest and work have nothing to do with their own. Consequently, this is systematic hostility against an employer who has never done them anything but good, and with whom, only yesterday, they declared themselves satisfied. I will not give in to such manœuvres. What reason have they for ceasing work? Let them formulate their claims. I give you my word that if the works are not in full activity to-morrow morning, I will pass all my orders over to Steingel and lock the doors here. You may announce to everybody concerned what I say."

"Do not allow yourself to be carried away by feel-

ings of indignation, however just, monsieur," said the sub-manager, dismayed. "Give yourself time for reflection."

"Have these fools given me time for reflection?" retorted Didelod, becoming more and more excited. "Have they given me the slightest warning? They take me by the throat, knowing that we are overrun with work, and thinking to place me in a serious state of embarrassment. Well! they will learn to their cost that they cannot sport with such a man as I am. They wish to employ violence. I, too, will reply with violence. Listen, monsieur; even if I ruin myself, they shall discover how much they lose by following out a method inspired by ingratitude and injustice!"

CHAPTER VII

THE MOB AND ITS MASTER

AS he left the works by the door leading through the forwarding department, Bouillaud came out on to the railroad track joining the Didelod establishment to the Lehrange station. He quickly found his way, and started in the direction of Badonviller, with the object of informing the owner's family of what had happened, and reflecting as to the best means of restoring order. It took him nearly an hour to cover the ground, and he reached the château just as Maurice was preparing to leave on horseback. A look of uneasiness appeared on the young man's face as he saw Bouillaud appear, alone and on foot. He drew near.

"What has brought you back without my father?" he asked. "Has the carriage met with an accident?"

"No; I left your father at the works. There is serious trouble, of which I have come to inform you all."

"What has happened?"

"Just as I came away a band of workmen from the town was threatening to force the gates. They have a crow to pick with the staff, but as a preliminary they were making short work with the windows. . . ."

"What! Were they using violent measures?"

"Things look serious. At all events, Stylb who is at the head of the movement, is bent on driving your father to some act of repression. . . ."

"My father will never make up his mind to such a course. I am only too well acquainted with his ideas, his principles."

"Then I am afraid something unpleasant will happen. . . ."

"What is to be done?"

"Word must be sent to the mounted police."

"A brigade of eight men. . . . What could they do? They would be disabled in no time."

"You may be right. . . ."

"Warn the sub-prefect, and let him take all due precautions."

"What precautions?"

"That is his business; he is there to attend to such things."

"Shall I ring him up on the telephone?"

"No; send a line by a man on horseback. Just a few words. Then he cannot say he has not received your message."

"Why should he say this?"

"Can one possibly tell? Suppose the demonstration were to succeed!"

"Then I will write. Now I'm off to my father."

"Enter by the door overlooking the railway. That's how I slipped away."

"Very well. Take care not to startle my mother, though I want you to give her the news."

"Good, my young hero. Be as prudent as possible!"

Maurice ran off to the harness-room to write his note. Bouillaud mounted the steps leading up to the terrace, and seeing the French window of the drawing-room open, he entered. Madame Didelod was seated, working at some embroidery, whilst Laurance was

bending over a small desk writing. Both mother and daughter raised their heads as they saw him enter; their countenances wore an expression of the utmost surprise.

"Do not alarm yourselves," said the politician. "I could not stay with M. Didelod to look over the works with him. A quite unforeseen mishap prevented us. . . ."

"Nothing serious?" asked Mme. Didelod. "Those workmen are so imprudent and careless, and the machines they control are so powerful. . . ."

"No, madame, it is nothing serious. At any rate, not up to the time I left."

"Where was my husband?"

"In his office. . . ."

"Then it was he who sent you here?"

"Yes, madame, in obedience to a sentiment of delicacy which does not astonish me in the least. He was determined that I should not be implicated in a riotous fray which was taking place in front of the works. . . . You see, had I become mixed up, even against my will, in a disturbance of this kind the matter would immediately have assumed a degree of importance it ought not to have. Accordingly, M. Didelod requested me to leave. . . ."

"And he remained behind."

"Yes, surrounded by a devoted band of workmen. Believe me, he is not in the slightest danger."

"All the same," remarked Laurence, who had been listening attentively to Bouillaud's explanations, "perhaps precautionary measures should be taken. . . .

The deputy gave Mlle. Didelod a shrewd glance. He bowed deferentially and smiled, as he became

aware of the girl's presence of mind and strength of character.

"All necessary orders have been given, mademoiselle," he said. "A messenger has gone on horseback to the police-station, and your brother is now with M. Didelod. Everything is being done that human foresight can suggest. Still, surprises may always be expected when dealing with a disturbance of the people. Large masses of men are like children; at once simple-minded and impulsive, their passions can be calmed by a tactful expression, or let loose as the result of a few ill-timed words."

Laurence tossed her head impatiently.

"Whilst you are dealing out pretty phrases to us here, what is going on at the works? I cannot restrain my desire to learn something. . . . I am going to telephone to the office. . . ."

"I am afraid you will hear nothing definite. . . . If your father has entered into a parley, he will not have time to reply."

"There will be my brother in his stead."

Laurence passed into her father's room and began to press the button. The apparatus, however, remained dumb, and after a few minutes she returned, looking very downcast, as though she dreaded some dire misfortune.

"It is within the range of possibility that the wire has been cut by the rioters," remarked Bouillaud.

"With what object?"

"To isolate the works and prevent repression."

"Then you confess that these men have evil intentions?"

"I cannot confess what I do not know. We are

arguing on suppositions. It is quite evident that if five or six hundred individuals have grouped themselves together to plunder and riot, they will take every precaution to prevent themselves from being disturbed."

"Ah! monsieur," said Mme. Didelod bitterly, "and this is what your party calls liberty!"

"There is excess in everything, madame; the masters misuse their authority, the men misuse their numbers. They are both human beings, and intelligence has not yet reached a very high level."

Bouillaud proudly raised his head, and, suddenly fired by the sound of his own words, continued:

"A crowd of people will never have anything but what has been suggested to them; they go just where the one they look upon as ringleader takes them. Those who are in the habit of controlling popular masses take a passionate delight in feeling the ideas and wills of others change as new arguments are brought to bear upon them. On such occasions a huge concourse resembles a mighty sea, swelling and raging or gently murmuring, according as the wind is violent and furious or gentle and quiet. Then you can understand, as you hold in your hand the very soul of so many people gathered together, how easy it is to rouse or to quiet the human tempest. It is one of the greatest joys in existence, for here one enters into full consciousness of one's intellectual superiority."

"But, then, what a responsibility is incurred by a man who at his mere fancy thus controls the decisions of a crowd, capable of giving way to any excess! Whatever you may say, it is easier to let loose the

animal in man than to force it to obedience, and in this business of people-tamer, how many have fallen victims after having been conquerors?"

It seemed as though Mme. Didelod, as she utttered these words, had had the power to summon forth and evoke the monster of revolution, for a shout was now heard in the distance, causing the two women to tremble with fear.

"What's that?" said Bouillaud.

Proceeding to the terrace, he saw, winding across the plain, along the road to Lehrange, a dark mass of men making their way in the direction of the château. They were singing and shouting as they advanced in threatening array, flinging their arms about and brandishing cudgels in the air. It was a column of furious assailants, not a body of quiet citizens. They penetrated into the park, which was open in the direction of the wood, and scattered all over the green turf which led to the gardens and was itself enclosed by clumps of trees. Their frenzied cries, mingled with insults and threats, could now be clearly heard as they burst into the garden, passed over the flower-beds like an invasion of mud, and collected at the foot of the balustrade. Nothing was to be seen but grinning faces and mouths filled with bitter invectives and curses, followed by a prolonged howl of hatred as they pointed their fingers at the roof of the château, rising in solid might and magnificence before their eyes. So rapid and sudden had this invasion been that Bouillaud and his two hostesses had scarcely had time to exchange a few words. Some of the boldest of the rioters had already begun to mount the flight of steps, when the Socialist deputy seemed to come to a sudden

determination. Turning to Mme. Didelod and Laurence, he said in firm, decided accents:

"Leave everything to me, ladies, and do not show yourselves on any account."

Boldly advancing on to the terrace, with countenance serious and cold, almost stern, he walked up to the mob. On seeing him the most reckless fell back, a dull murmur arose from their midst, and a voice uttered his name, which was immediately taken up by the rest. "It's Pierre Bouillaud, the Socialist deputy," was the sentence which reached the furthest limits of the revolutionary column. On reaching the topmost of the flight of steps, which formed a kind of platform, he leaned against the railings of the terrace, and, following up his advantage, made a sign with his hand to impose silence on the crowd. Then, in a clear and harmonious voice, which always exercised powerful sway over his listeners, he began to speak.

Seated in the drawing-room, near the open window, quite out of sight, though losing not a word that was uttered, mother and daughter now had an opportunity of witnessing such an exercise of power and domination as Bouillaud, a few minutes previously, had been dilating upon in terms of proud self-satisfaction. There, beneath their very eyes, the demonstration of what he had been saying was taking place in the hold this eloquent speaker had gained over his fascinated listeners. With rare art, in which was revealed his desire to triumph in the presence of Laurence and her mother, Bouillaud was now giving utterance to a choicer flow of language than he had even taken the trouble to do before. He had taken

upon himself the task of taming that monster, the people, which had come there, maddened and furious, and after beginning by charming and delighting it, he was now using it roughly, with brutal scorn, the better to make it feel his power.

"What is the meaning, citizens, of this threatening march on private property, when you knew you would meet no one here but women and inoffensive servants? Is that a respectable way to uphold your rights? Must it be said that, under the pretext of claiming liberty to work, you employ violence against feeble human beings, and force your way into a home which has always given a cordial welcome to suffering fellow-mortals? Shall I, who, ever since I attained the age of manhood, have spent my whole life in the defence of the principles of democracy, be sorrowfully compelled to come into touch with the valiant toilers of the provinces in the east of France, for nothing else than to remind them of their duty, and lead them back into the path of law and order? Force, remember, is not everything, and an appeal to violence, whatever be the circumstances, would soon make our party detested by all right-thinking men. What answer will you give to those who favour reaction, when, after having so justly fought them for their abuse of personal authority, they reply that it is even worse to practise collective tyranny, and that, taking one thing with another, a single man oppressing a whole people is greater than a whole people leagued against one individual? What is it you are doing now? Just examine your actions and look into your thoughts. You are invading an open house, where you knew you would find none but defenceless women. Is such a

step worthy of the generous-hearted men now listening to me What were you expecting to do here?"

Bouillaud was walking to and fro, on the top of the steps, with bowed head, whilst a prolonged acquiescent murmur rose from the crowd below. He was now master of his listeners, feeling them bound to him by the golden thread of eloquence, and eager to listen to more. Descending a few steps, he drew nearer. Then of a sudden his countenance lit up; he smiled, and continued in more familiar tones:

"I have not come here to talk of politics; I am just a passing visitor in this beautiful district of yours, resting from the fatigue caused by the continual, the daily struggle I have undertaken to secure the triumph of the working classes. Suppose to-morrow you read in your local papers that whilst a riot of strikers was in progress I addressed the crowds—which will be quite true, since I am now talking to you—do you know what our enemies will say: 'Bouillaud has gone to sow the seeds of turmoil and disorder in the department of Meurthe-et-Moselle. On the very confines of the German frontier he has gone to preach revolt and insurrection, with the object of disorganizing French commerce.' How shall I be able to reply that such a report is an infamous and slanderous calumny if you abandon yourselves to acts of violence against private property, and if I, Didelod's friend and guest, am looked upon as having led you in an attack on his own house? If you have any esteem at all for me, and my former services in your behalf call forth your sympathy, then return peacefully homewards, show that you are capable of setting an example of self-control. Liberty can remain intact and inviolate

only on condition that we make it a point of honour, each of us, to practise the utmost tolerance towards one another. Democracy is powerful, but it ought also to be noble and pure. Hitherto it has made so many material sacrifices to social progress that it ought to find it an easy matter to attain to moral greatness along the paths of gentleness and brotherhood."

In the silence the sonorous, vibrating words thrilled the masses below like a song full of melodious harmony. The meaning of the phrases no longer existed in the minds of the listeners; it was the music of the voice alone that exercised such a charm. Delighted at the result, no longer reasoning for themselves, and incapabable of distinguishing, in the entangled sentences, the hackneyed commonplaces of the harangue, the rioters gave themselves up to the music of the sounds uttered by the fascinating wizard. When he had finished he came down in their midst, and, shaking the hands outstretched to him, said.

"I should like to have a talk with you on these matters, but it must not be here. This evening I will be in Lehrange, if you will wait for me there. Then we shall be free from all restraint, nor shall we be subjected to any malevolent insinuations. Will this suit you? I shall be happy to place myself in your hands."

"Yes! Yes!" shouted the rioters. "Long live Bouillaud!"

"Well, then, you had better go now, and to-night you may wait for me quietly at the entrance to the town."

"We will be there! Three cheers for Bouillaud!"

Quietly, without hesitation or discussion, those

who had come breathing cries of vengeance and hatred now returned perfectly satisfied, through the wood, back to the town. Bouillaud watched them for a moment, an ironical smile playing on his lips, then he slowly mounted the flight of steps and re-entered the drawing-room. The two women were there awaiting him. At a glance he read on their countenances the feelings they had been passing through and were now experiencing. The preciseness with which practical effect had been given to his theory had filled them with mingled surprise and admiration. It would have been impossible for any man to have realised in a more complete fashion the programme he had just been setting forth. What he had explained to them of his way of mastering a crowd he had, in their very presence and with the most extraordinary ease, carried through in every detail.

"How wonderful is this persuasive power of yours!" said Mme. Didelod, who never thought of thanking Bouillaud for the service he had just rendered her, so natural did it appear now that everything was past.

Laurence smiled as she added:

"It explains the legend of Orpheus, when he tamed the savage beasts. . . ."

"Not very savage, after all, as you saw," said the deputy. "How easy a matter it is to divert them from putting into execution their evil plans!"

"Because a favourable was substituted for a pernicious influence. But what would have happened if my mother and myself had been exposed to these madmen?"

"Your personal prestige would have manifested

itself, mademoiselle," said Bouillaud gallantly. "The very concessions these rioters have made to my reasoning they would have offered to your graciousness. . . . ."

"I fear not. Courtesy seems to me to be a sense lacking in such beings, quite as much as respect for whatever is beautiful and dainty. . . . Just see what they have done to these flower-beds, which looked so charming only this morning. . . ."

Across the garden the rabble had poured like an avalanche, breaking plants on their way, crushing bushes under foot, devasting flower-beds, and leaving behind on the spot where a wealth of colour and fragrance had been but an hour before nothing but a sorry mass of muddy debris.

"See!" said the young girl, "that is a picture of what revolution produces: first ruin and devastation, then utter neglect. Where is there any profit in all this?"

"It is a law of destiny," said Bouillaud, "that human progress can be achieved only by violence. Those philosophers who dream of establishing a state of harmony in society, and perpetuating this harmony by universal consent and approval, are Utopists. Force is the only thing in the world that can create those reforms that are necessary to the happiness of all. Whoever affirms the contrary is either a fool or a knave."

"Oh, yes!" said Laurence ironically, "we are not ignorant of these methods of persuasion: liberty, equality, or death. The proceedings are always the same. Was it not one of the leaders of your party who created the aphorism: you do not dispute with

an opponent, you suppress him? Thus, on the one hand, we have a revolutionary mass, plastic and yielding as wax in the hands of those who know how to manage it, and capable of being roused to action or kept under control, though always ready armed for violence and destruction; and, on the other hand, a few gifted leaders, conscious of the goal to which they are advancing, and unhesitating as to the means to be employed in order to secure victory. That's the balance-sheet of your party. Well, conscientiously speaking, were I not bound by the service you have just done us, I should say . . ."

She stopped, waved her hand as though to drive away a crowd of disturbing ideas, and continued with a smile:

"No, I will not say it."

Bouillaud walked up to her, with flashing eyes and flaming countenance, as he said:

"It is very humiliating for me, mademoiselle, if you will not speak out your mind frankly. There is nothing you could say that I should not be happy to listen to."

The sound of a hurried footstep on the gravel of the terrace interrupted Bouillaud, as Maurice Didelod walked rapidly up to his mother and sister.

"Don't be uneasy," he shouted from a distance. "Father is safe and sound. . . . We have been greatly alarmed, however, and a terrible misfortune has happened."

In a few words the young man told of the invasion of the works, the arrival of the dragoons, the affray that had followed, the outburst of fire, the assault on the staff, and finally the death of Lieuten-

ant Maubrun. He had witnessed the latest exploits of the rioters, so it was in a state of despondent sadness he now learnt in his turn that, had it not been for the intervention of Bouillaud, insult might have been offered to his mother and sister and their home pillaged.

"I must return to my father," he said. "I only came to assure you of his safety and give you the news. I will tell him how things have been going here. What a rage he will be in when he hears of the attempt against Badonviller! During the whole morning one illusion of his after another has been shattered. Really, he has been too badly recompensed for all the good he has done, and what he wished to do, in spite of everything!'

"You are certain he is out of danger?" asked Mme. Didelod, looking gravely at her son.

"Had it not been so, mother, I should not have been here, I should not have left his side."

"You are a good fellow, Maurice, and a dutiful son."

All three accompanied the young man to the stableyard, where a groom was leading to and fro a horse covered with sweat.

"You rode fast as you came," remarked Laurence, with a smile.

"Yes, and I shall return faster still."

Leaping into the saddle, he picked up the reins and trotted off. No sooner was he out of the yard than he set his horse at a gallop and disappeared in the park. Mme. Didelod re-entered the château, leaving her daughter with Bouillaud. The two young people walked side by side in front of the orange-walk,

then Laurence sat down, and, pointing to a seat, said to her companion:

"My brother's arrival interrupted us just as you were on the point of explaining your opinions. I am now ready to hear what you have to say, and I can promise that I will answer you with the utmost frankness. I have not been kept in ignorance of the plans my father had formed. He has always treated me as a serious-minded person, before whom he could speak openly. I tell you this to set you at your ease, for I feel that in you I have to deal with a superior individual. Accordingly, I will treat you as such, without disguising my opinions in the slightest."

"The position in which we are both placed, mademoiselle, is not a novel one. It has appeared at all times of crisis, notably at the beginning of last century, when the daughters of the aristocracy found themselves in the presence of the leaders of the Revolution and Napoleon's famous lieutenants. They were the representatives of two worlds as distinct and opposite as they could possibly be. Proud, sturdy countrymen and commoners of genius on the one hand, the haughty descendants of blue-blooded races on the other. Nevertheless, fusion took place, resulting in that great, laborious and wealthy *bourgeoisie* of France, which has created the powerful society whose apogee we are witnessing nowadays, and whose end, it may be, is at hand. The part played by the daughters of the aristocracy is now taken by those of the *bourgeoisie,* and the men of the Revolution are replaced by the present-day Socialists. A new world is in labour. The main thing to learn is whether or no, generally speaking, the interested par-

ties will be willing to contribute towards this great work."

"Speaking from a purely material standpoint, monsieur," replied Laurence, "I think many concessions can be obtained from a class which is not disposed to go down into the streets to defend itself, arms in hand. In the moral order of things, however, I am firmly convinced that it will offer no capitulation. You may coerce, or do violence to interests, but you will never succeed in forcing sentiments. To speak plainly, it is impossible to admit that a girl like myself, with my present religious ideas and social habits, could marry—I will not say a Freethinker—but a systematic destroyer of religion. I might easily find other signs of incompatibility, but this one will suffice, as it clearly indicates the position in which we both stand at the present moment. I have no doubt whatever but that if I insisted on a religious marriage as the condition of my consent, you would be willing to pass through the Church. Such a concession, on the part of an unbeliever, would be a worthless sham, a simple act of politeness to a woman. But though it might be easy for you not to remember the harm you have done the Church, a similar forgetfulness would be impossible for me. I am orthodox in my belief, and I will never permit the worship of my God to be treated lightly. If I have children, I will have them baptized and reared in the religion of Rome. Given your ideas, I believe it would be impossible for you to consent to this, for it would be an avowal that you had been on the wrong track all the time, and that the path I am determined to tread is a better one. Hence strife and discord in

family life, just as in the outer world. You see, monsieur, what kind of future would be in store for us. I am too clear-sighted to accept it, nor do I think you can blame me for confessing it to you so frankly."

"I can only praise and admire you," said Bouillaud, with a smile, "for your dignified sentiments and outspoken words. I have not been mistaken in you; you are just the kind of woman I had taken you to be. Therefore do not wonder if, holding such an opinion of you I do not readily yield to your arguments. You are well worth any effort that might be made to win you, and I feel certain you would despise me were I to give you up without a struggle. Try to understand that I claim to move only so far as sentiment is concerned, for to me it seems impossible that one so intelligent as you are should not be struck by the clear signs which announce a social transformation before many years are past, or wish to escape the general upheavel which will result therefrom. Would it not be a fine thing to triumph where so many thoughtless individuals, who are devoid of foresight, will fail?"

Laurence shook her head and smiled as she answered:

"When Satan wished to tempt Jesus, he transported him to the summit of a lofty mountain and, pointing downwards, said: 'There is the world, it is thine.' He was offering, however, what did not belong to him. And that is what you are doing."

"To-morrow is ours. Society is crumbling away beneath the attacks of the proletariat."

"Consequently, you will rule over nothing but

ruins. But your party can do nothing but destroy, of that I am well aware. Ours alone is capable of building up. And when you have passed, like barbarians, over this old world of ours, all in wreck and ruin, we shall rise up again after you, and, with the debris you have left, reconstruct a new society."

Bouillaud, with half-closed eyes, looked for a moment at the young girl, admiring her animated gestures and gauging the height of her thoughts. He did not reply for a moment, then, in accents tinged with a certain degree of sadness, he suddenly said:

"What admirable powers of mind, spent in a resistance henceforth destined to be ineffectual! How unfortunate it is that a soul like yours should not have been won over to our ideas, and illumined with the light of modern thought! That is a loss for which I can find no consolation."

"You have mentioned the word soul, and quite rightly. But in my opinion it is just because I have a soul that I think so. Your work, day by day, consists in destroying the soul of France, noble and beautiful as it is! What a blind and incoherent policy! Is not the same thing it pleases you to admire in me also worthy of admiration in all the women and children of France who think and believe as I do? What kind of opinion do you hold of yourself and of your friends if, when they are capable of appreciating such ideas and beliefs, you make it a matter of sport and jest to ridicule and destroy them? You were speaking just now of the light of modern thought Alas! there can be no light more brilliant than that you are doing your best to extinguish! You see, however, that it is a light that shines stead-

ily and clearly; in spite of everything, the time has not yet come for its glory to be cast down."

Bouillaud sat there, dumb, with downcast head, as though listening to the voice of his conscience, motionless before the grief and sorrow of his companion. Never before had the young girl been stirred to such passion and enthusiasm. She felt that she was fighting the whole spirit of the Revolution, incarnated in one of its most powerful leaders. What Bouillaud had said was perfectly true. Two worlds clashed together in their respective persons: the great *bourgeoisie,* represented by Laurence in her refinement of education, delicacy of thought, and strength of conviction; and a trained, organised proletariat, full of bold ambition, represented by himself. They sat there, face to face, and everything that was jarring or immutable in their differing tendencies now manifested itself. It was impossible for them to agree, to enter each other's mind. Time alone could effect an amalgamation of these two classes, in revolt against one another, though this would never be the result of a free consent. The young man seemed to be reflecting along the same lines as Laurence, and to have reached the same conclusion. With a deep sigh he said:

"Then what am I to do to win you?"

"What you could accomplish only by demeaning yourself in my eyes, throw over all your opinions."

"You are right," he remarked, "and so we have nothing further to say to each other. All the same, mademoiselle, I shall carry away with me an indelible remembrance of this conversation with you. If my convictions could be shaken, they would be at

the thought of you, so strong, and proud, and intelligent. But then," he added with a smile, "you are an exception in the party to which you belong."

'Do not be too sure of that!" exclaimed Laurence. "You would gladly persuade yourself that such is the case to reassure your conscience. That's where you show yourself so unorthodox and sectarian."

They both laughed.

"Come," said he, "let us shake hands without reserve. I have no ill-feeling, so do not you entertain a feeling of disdain towards me."

She held out her hand. He clasped it in his own.

"I should dearly have loved not to give it you back. It seems, however, I am unworthy of such a favour."

Eagerly she replied:

"The one who is to keep it is not your equal. Still, he thinks and prays as I do, and that will make up for all the rest."

Bouillaud bowed, but made no reply. Looking away, he pointed out in the distance to a rapidly approaching carriage.

"See! there's your father returning. Now we shall learn what has happened."

They went back into the château. Mme. Didelod had already been informed of her husband's approach, and was waiting in the vestibule. The gravity of the situation could be ascertained by a mere glance at Didelod's face. The member for Lehrange looked ten years older. His countenance, which was generally wreathed in smiles, was now pale and drawn. His rumpled cravat and collar testified to the violence of the efforts he had to make to es-

cape from the rioters. With heavy steps he came down from the carriage.

"Well," interrogated Bouillaud, "how are things going now?"

'Disorder and fighting everywhere! The situation could not be worse! Come inside, this is not a suitable place for explanations."

Followed by his friend and his wife and daughter, he went straight to his private room and, sinking into an arm-chair:

"The rascals!" he exclaimed. "They have set fire to the works, tried to cut a watchman to pieces, and killed an officer. . . . Besides, my own workmen have joined these madmen and are out on strike. . . . For what reason? . . . They would be greatly embarrassed to say! They allege all kinds of pretexts, demanding collective contracts of work and such innovations. All that, however, is nothing; the worst is that they have insulted me, after all I have done for them! I feel grieved and vexed beyond measure at the wickedness and folly they have shown. Just think, you make sacrifices all your life to be rewarded as I am now!"

"My dear friend," remarked Bouillaud, "gratitude finds no place among the virtues of the masses. Besides, were we to uphold the interests of the people in the hope that our recompense would come, we should be indulging in the most abominable of speculations. The people are in no way indebted to those who fight for them. Their cause is so just and righteous that the privilege of championing it is an honour to one-self."

"Yes! Certainly! But then, do sacrifices of

money form part of the programme? To share the opinions of the people and combat for their triumph is a very simple matter. But to loosen your purse-strings for them, to board and feed them and help them in innumerable material ways, is that also natural? Must that, too, be reckoned as a thing of no account, deserving not even a word of thanks? For thirty years I have been acting as treasurer to the democracy in general, and to my own workmen in particular. It's coming it rather trong, if I may be permitted to use the expression, when, in order to show their gratitude, the people set fire to my works, threaten me with death, and call for my downfall. For 'your money or your life' they substitute 'your money and your life'!"

"Calm yourself, my dear," said Mme. Didelod; "you know you are master of the situation."

"Yes, I know it," exclaimed Didelod vigorously; "and they do wrong to force me to remember the fact. I have always treated them as friends and brothers. They accepted everything, and doubtless looked upon me as the very incarnation of meanness. After all, what is it they want? My works and my money; the product of the labour and enterprise of the Didelods, generation after generation. 'Peasant, take the land; workman, take the tool!' is the motto we have repeated to them, time after time, for years and years past! You, Bouillaud, who have neither tool nor land, were quite right. But what kind of advice was it, coming from me, who have both? Fool as I was, I advised them to plunder me! Yes, I was so foolish and stupid that, in my love for democracy, if it had been necessary, I should have been

quite capable of handing over the works to them, with the words, 'Let us share it!' Share, indeed! Nonsense! They want the whole, that I see clearly. carried through in the most brutal fashion! You ought to have seen them waving their arms frantically in the air, and looks of hate and envy stamped on every face. Ah! the man who has not had to deal with his own workmen in a state of insurrection and revolt does not yet know the meaning of the word democracy! These men have made my heart bleed, they have destroyed in me the illusions of a whole lifetime. It is that in them I can never forgive!"

Tears sprang to his eyes and began to flow down his cheeks. In presence of the sincere grief of this excellent man, the innocent victim of blind generosity, Bouillaud sat there in silence. He had nothing to say so far as sentiment was concerned, but with reference to the material facts of the case a reply would have been easy. Still, he did not wish to shock his troubled host before knowing how far his irritation against the workmen would lead him. Didelod smiled at Laurence, who, with her scented handkerchief, was gently drying her father's tears. Confirmed in his new resolve, he continued, with eyes fixed on Bouillaud:

"See here! Shall I tell you what I think after the shock I have just gone through? I feel myself to be a victim, a dupe. I have warped my whole life by endeavouring to bring into it a line of policies altogether irreconcilable with my family and education, my position and fortune. In society there are many people out of their sphere, unclassed ones of every kind; I am one of them. I have put on a workman's

blouse over my frock coat. But the real wearers of blouses have not been deceived thereby; they have treated me as an outsider. The moral of all this is that one must stay in one's own set and not change sides; hold fast to the principles and rules of life adopted by those in whose midst one has been born and bred. A Didelod preventing nuns from ministering to the poor, closing the village church, and favouring Collectivism is a social monstrosity. It is this which my workmen have been at no pains to conceal in dealing with me as a false comrade, an enemy. My father used to say that social opinions ought to be the mirror and reflection of private interests. Evidently he was a man without an ideal to live up to. Still, he allowed himself to be guided by the dictates of common sense, whilst I, who have been in the habit of criticising him, and actually refused to look upon him as my own parent, have not acted so prudently as he did."

"Come, come, Didelod, calm yourself," remarked Bouillaud. "Just now you feel exasperated and inclined to go to extremes. Later on you will make allowance for human folly with reference to the events which have just taken place, and, with your usual loftiness of view, will incline towards an attitude of tolerance. . . ."

"Ah! my dear fellow, if there were only myself to consider, I might be so stupid as to give in once more. . . . But others have to be thought of. . . . I have shareholders in the business. . . . I represent interests which it is my duty to defend. . . . My brother-in-law, M. Jules Reismann, will soon be on the spot, and I know quite well how he

will look at the situation! He will not show himself conciliating and good-natured, in the French style: no, he will insist on the establishment of such order and discipline as Germans are accustomed to. It will be a case of locking up the whole building within twenty-four hours if the men have not resumed work. . . . That is what I said this very morning to my overseers at Lehrange. . . . A lock-out. . . . And every order passed over to Steingel."

"What will the Government say "

"Is it on the Government that I depend? Am I not my own master? Are we under State rules? No, thank Heaven! I see only too well where they would lead us. If the Government wishes to obtain anything from me, let it give me a pledge of its good faith."

"What pledge?"

"That it will put a stop to the campaign which has been begun against us."

"Can it do this? The Government has allies who do not obey it."

"In that case let it crush them! Do they really take me for a fool? Do they think I do not know on whose account they are doing their best to ruin my business? It is Stylb who is at the head of all the trouble; it is his avowed intention to rob me of my seat in the Chamber. And this is how they act towards me! Am I to be their dupe without an attempt to defend myself? Nonsense! Stylb will disappear; the revolutionary trouble will come to an end, and work at Lehrange will be resumed within twenty-four hours; or else—you hear me, Bouillaud, for I want you to take my ultimatum to those who

must have it in the very terms I am now stating—or else I will close my works for a whole year, and leave my enemies the task of feeding the workmen they have roused into insurrection against me."

"Very good, my dear fellow, I will do as you wish. Now I must take leave of you, for tonight I have to meet the local leaders of the party at Lehrange. To-morrow, in Paris, I shall confer with our political friends. You shall know without delay what you may expect from them."

"Let them think of what they may expect from me. I will place myself at their service if they will do the same for me."

A quarter of an hour later Bouillaud had taken his departure and was driving in the direction of Lehrange.

CHAPTER VIII

ARMY AND PEOPLE

THE lieutenant's body had been carried back to the house in which he had lived; his friends Maxime de Berlier and Maurice Didelod were keeping watch at the bedside. The family had been informed of the sad event, but had not yet had time to arrive on the spot. The news of the murder had rapidly spread throughout the town, filling all with amazement and stupefaction. The soldiers had all been confined to their barracks, and even orders had been issued to the officers not to appear in uniform. The authorities dreaded a conflict between soldiers and strikers. The former had been so greatly exasperated by the blows they had passively submitted to the previous night, orders having been given that they were not to return them, that it was quite certain swords would be drawn at the slightest insult. At all costs, they must prevent a collision, the consequences of which it would be impossible to foretell. The general, irritated beyond measure, said not a word.

It was a triumph for anti-militarism, and Grangel was indulging in violent, extravagant language, which had brought him into contact with the subprefect. M. Crânet, devoted to Didelod's interests and politics, was keeping a very close watch over the schoolmaster's intrigues. Grangel had always shown

himself very deferential towards the representative of the Government, lavishing on him the greatest tokens of respect and submission at all public ceremonies. Consequently, the sub-prefect regarded himself as in a position to obtain from the schoolmaster a promise to bring his propaganda to an immediate stop. He kept him waiting, the better to enable him to understand the difference between a petty teacher and the representative of civil power. Finally he received him into his presence. Leaning against the mantelpiece of his office, he pointed to a chair near the desk and said, with a frown:

"I am not at all pleased with you, Monsieur Grangel."

Looking over his spectacles, the schoolmaster gave the sub-prefect an ironical glance as he asked in shrill tones:

'In what respect have I had the misfortune to displease you?"

"You speak too much and bring me into difficulties with the army authorities. M. Didelod complains that you incite the men to rebellion. All this, M. Grangel, is quite outside your own sphere of labour. It has nothing to do with the instruction of children."

"Excuse me, monsieur," interrupted the schoolmaster. "That does not prevent my being also a citizen. Outside of my school I am entitled to hold an opinion of my own and to proclaim it."

"It would be better if you were neutral. You diminish your influence when you oppose the ideas of a portion of the community. What interests have you in acting so "

"That of promoting a just cause."

"The just cause, for a servant of the State, is that maintained by the Government on which he depends. Now I am not aware that the Government is anti-patriotic!"

"Neither am I."

"All the same, you attack the army."

"What has the army in common with patriotism?"

"It forms its defence!"

From the lips of the schoolmaster there issued a low whistle, so utterly lacking in respect that a sudden flush mounted to M. Crânet's face. To voice his indignation he tried to think of some administrative phrase, crushing enough to silence his opponent. He was not allowed time to find one, for Grangel said:

"I will not offer you the insult, monsieur, of believing that you really think what you are saying. You are too intelligent a man not to make all necessary distinctions between an army which is really democratic and the capitalistic forces we actually see about us. I should be sorry to find myself forced to confess that you have been won over to a policy opposed to the people, which is preparing to incite brutish, besotted soldiers against earnest, noble-minded workers. . . ."

The sub-prefect jestingly attempted to answer Grangel's sectarian solemnity.

"I would beg you to observe that these noble-minded workers of yours are not working; they are on strike."

"Yes, they are on strike because the masters have

driven them to extremities by ill-treatment of one kind or another."

"What's that? Does M. Neumans ill-treat them, or M. Didelod? Are these the kind of men you accuse of ill-treatment? Are they not good masters?"

"There are no good masters," declared Grangel sternly. "There are only masters."

"Would you destroy them? Come, you know that is quite impossible. Every one has his master. Yours is the Minister of Education; mine is the Minister of the Interior."

"You may be a slave, monsieur," said Grangel brutally. "I, anyhow, am a free man and recognise no other authority than reason."

"Well, monsieur," replied Crânet, this time losing his temper, "I would recommend you to show some respect for the authority of your Head Inspector. A simple report from him might cause you endless trouble."

"Let him only dare!" said the schoolmaster. "I will undertake to keep him in his place, and many another like him, who attaches too much importance to his miserable personality!"

"What is the meaning of this?"

"It means that I am not speaking in my name alone, do you hear, Citizen Crânet? Here, before you, I represent something else than a poor provinical schoolmaster."

"Citizen" Crânet, to his utter amazement, saw standing before him a Grangel he had hitherto been completely ignorant of, cunning and menacing. He was not left long in doubt, for the schoolmaster continued:

"Up to the present my opinion of you has been a favourable one on the whole. Without taking into consideration your devotion to Didelod and his interests—for concessions must be made to human frailty—you appear to me a man on whom one might rely. Will you destroy my confidence in you by speaking in this reactionary fashion? The interference of the military yesterday in the Lehrange strike was a most deplorable incident. Had it not been for the self-control shown by the workers most serious results might have followed. Our friend Pierre Bouillaud, the member for Mirandol, was staying with Didelod when the works were invaded by the dragoons. He was at Badonviller when the rioters marched there to protest against the violence shown by the soldiers. Last night he presided over our committee meeting and approved of all our resolutions. . . . Bouillaud returned to Paris by the midnight train, and is at this very moment in the company of the man you look upon as your superior, Citizen Crânet. He is explaining the whole situation, requesting hm for administrative support against the liberty-destroying plans and projects of the controller of the Lehrange works, and prepared to support us to the best of his ability."

Grangel sat down, formidable and disdainful, before the horrified sub-prefect.

"You may repeat all this to the Head Inspector," said the schoolmaster bitterly, "now that you know everything in its true aspect."

"But . . . stammered the representative of the State, "what about the murdered lieutenant and the wounded dragoons . . . "

"Had they been within barracks nothing would have befallen them. . . ."

"But then, freedom of labour. . . ."

"Freedom of labour should exist solely for the benefit of the workers; the masters have sufficient weapons with which to defend themselves. When a strike is declared, it becomes binding on every workman. The slightest disloyalty consitutes treason, which must be put down, even though it be by force. This is no matter for trifling, Citizen Crânet, the fight between master and man has begun. The one must kill the other; as a preliminary to this, blows must be struck. Between the masters and ourselves stands only the army; consequently the army must be abolished."

"And what of France!" exclaimed the sub-prefect indignantly. "What will become of our country, without a single soldier, with Germnay in arms on our frontiers?"

"She will go to meet Germany, her hands filled with flowers, and chanting hymns in praise of Peace. Then will all weapons of destruction fall from the hands of our foreign brothers."

"M. Grangel, I am sorry to find myself compelled to inform you that you are completely demented! The Germans will welcome you with musket-shots and seize upon Champagne and Burgundy. Then they will force you to toil like slaves, to pay the taxes of the whole of Germany. And if you show yourselves refractory, they will flog you! Take my word for it, M. Grangel, that very French tyranny against which you protest so strongly is nothing more

than a gentle, a friendly constraint, compared with what the German yoke would be. Think twice before you destroy our army; it is your only safeguard."

"You are tainted with Chauvinism, Citizen Crânet."

"And you are a sorry internationalist, Monsieur Grangel."

For a few moments they looked at each other in silence, then the sub-prefect, with a wave of the hand to indicate that the conversation was at an end, said:

"I have informed you of things with which it was your duty to be acquainted. Profit by my advice. At all events, I have administrative duties to fulfil, and I have no intention whatever of shirking them."

"I will record your declaration of war. Goodbye, Citizen Crânet."

"Your servant, M. Grangel."

Scarcely had the schoolmaster left the room than the usher announced the police-commissary. M. Crânet had by no means recovered from the state of bewilderment into which he had been plunged by the attitude Grangel had shown.

"You have just met the schoolmaster?" said the sub-prefect.

"I have, monsieur, and he scarcely acknowledged my greeting. But, after all, I am not astonished; he is burning his ships, and there is no going back for him now. Hitherto the hypocrite has kept up appearances, but now his sectarianism is getting the upper hand, and he is on the point of flinging himself madly into the ranks of the revolutionists. . . ."

"He has done so already! He has just been threatening me with all kinds of horrors. . . ."

"If you like, within twenty-four hours you can have him dismissed."

"What will he do in that case?"

"All the extravagant things the poor brain of an elementary schoolmaster is capable of imagining, after reading the rambling statements of the high priests of the social revolution. He is one of those who take seriously the theories of Guesde, the grandiloquence of Jaurès, and the ravings of Hervé. He will inform you, quite coolly, that capitalists, as a class, must be destroyed. . . ."

"That's what what he has just been telling me."

"There you are!"

"He also informed me that he would undertake to keep me in my place. Why does he show himself so arrogant?"

"He holds a high position in the lodge *Austère Amitié,* and is consequently M. Didelod's superior. I feel certan he is the man who supplied the 'Grand Orient' with all the information regarding the garrison officers, and forwarded reports hostile to yourself to the Minister of the Interior. . . ."

"The scoundrel! He must be made to skip! I will inform M. Didelod. . . ."

"Inform no one; just leave Grangel alone, he will soon put his foot in it. I will undertake to keep an eye on him. Within a few days he is sure to lay himself open to attack . . . The workmen are growing more threatening than ever. He is in collusion with them, and exercises absolute influence over their delegate, M. Tournemarie. . . ."

"Is not this Tournemarie the very man who attempted to murder an officer of the garrison?"

"Yes, the same man. I see, too, from the reports of my men that, after missing Lieutenant Maubrun on the first occasion, he fired the revolver-shot which killed him yesterday in the course of the rioting at Lehrange."

"Has he been arrested?"

"The day before yesterday he was brought before me by the town constable, but was rescued by his comrades whilst I had gone to scatter the crowds collected in front of the barracks. He is still at liberty. Before we could hold him safe under lock and key a regular battle would have to be fought. He is surrounded by the most desperate of the strikers, but I shall be able to lay hands on him when the time comes."

"What are you afraid will happen to-day?"

"I am afraid the meeting of Didelod's and Neumans' workmen, which is to take place shortly, will occasion serious trouble. Stylb is here, and, as you are aware, he is the agent of the revolutionary party and a professional strike-creator. He is all the more dangerous in that he is as sceptical as Grangel is sincere and fervent. Stylb is a sly rogue, who will turn his coat when the right time comes, and he is sure, some fine morning, to find himself established in some lucrative sinecure or other. There is a regular band of them, who shamelessly exploit the passions of the democracy and drive the workmen distracted with their high-sounding phrases, which the poor fellows listen to with gaping mouths. When any one says to them, regarding their favourite platform orator, 'He

is deceiving and exploiting you; he cares for your interests no more than the cigarette he has just flung to the ground,' they reply in delighted tones, 'Oh, how well he speaks!' How well he speaks, indeed! There you see the excuse for everything in their eyes. They are true descendants of those Gauls of old who were in the habit of stopping travellers on the roads and detaining them until they had related a tale. The result is that, by eloquence and audaciy, it is possible to incite these poor innocent fools to deeds of revolt and crime, even to murder itself."

Crânet remarked, after a moment's interval:

"It's a good thing, after all, that these fellows do speak. Did they not spend their energy in words they would do so in deeds, and that would be far worse."

"I do not believe in the danger society would incur by a few fire-brands like those who engross public attention. On the contrary, I am convinced that the exercise of a little firmness would keep them in perfect order. Their audacity is built on nothing else than the weakness of head-quarters. . . ."

"Hush!" remarked the sub-prefect, with a smile. "Not another word. We must not criticise our superiors."

"You are right. But in the case in hand we must do our duty; that will suffice for the present."

"I shall telephone to the minister for instructions."

"You will be answered with the usual phrase: 'Be prudent and do nothing'! Unfortunately, the question of doing nothing does not depend on us. The very thing we have to do is to combat opponents who

are determined to overthrow everything, for it is to their interest to effect an upheaval of society."

"I will have your orders forwarded to you as soon as I know myself what is to be done."

The commissary was preparing to take his departure when the usher introduced M. Didelod, followed by the faithful Gaudin.

"Well, my dear prefect, I have come to arrange for the funeral of this poor officer. . . . I am glad to see the commissary here, for, as mayor of the town, I am not without a certain degree of responsibility in whatever may happen. . . . We must do our best to avoid a disturbance."

"What are the methods you recommend to obtain this result?" asked the sub-prefect.

"That all signs of military display be omitted from the ceremony as far as possible. No marching past or parade of troops through the streets. . . ."

"But surely you could not think of preventing this young man's companions from following him to his last resting-place? . . ."

"I have just written requesting the family to have the body removed and taken to Paris, where the interment will take place. . . ."

"Do you think they will consent?"

"The father, M. Alexandre Maubrun, is treasurer and paymaster. He is bound to have been sent for by his superior, who will bring all due pressure to bear upon him. Certainly he is not likely to oppose an order tactfully given. . . . You see, here we are in a very difficult situation. . . . What can it matter to this poor bereaved father if no funeral service takes place for his son in a garrison town?"

"But then, what will the general and the colonel say? To neglect to offer a final farewell to a comrade, a victim of duty. . . ."

"There are enough victims as it is!" exclaimed M. Didelod, walking to and fro in a state of agitation. "I, too, am a victim! Besides, I don't intend to consult the general and the colonel. Are we to have the streets running with blood merely to satisfy the vanity and conceit of soldiers? . . . What better will they be if a few more of their men bite the dust? No, no! we will have no funeral service at Lehrange; we have enough to do without that! Now to another matter. It is an unheard-of thing, monsieur, that the town firemen put in no appearance yesterday when a portion of my works was burning. Is that the way they attend to their duty? This morning I severely reprimanded the captain ,who assured me he had received no orders and knew nothing about the fire. . . ."

"That's quite true. Telephonic communication had been stopped; the apparatus would not work."

"Had we been permitted to drive the cavalry against the mob this would not have happened!" . .

"But it was a man from Badonviller, M. Didelod, who came on horseback to demand the interference of the military. . . . If he had asked for the firemen . . ."

"Did he not do so?"

It was Gaudin who replied:

"No, monsieur, it was I who spoke to the groom from Badonviller. . . . Only the military were mentioned. . . ."

Didelod showed his displeasure by an irritated glance at Gaudin.

"Knowing my ideas as you do," he said, "you went to the sub-prefect to request that the cavalry be sent?"

"If the dragoons had not arrived, monsieur," exclaimed Gaudin, terrified, "Heaven knows what dangers you would have incurred. I say nothing of the works, which might have been burnt to the ground, but yourself. . . . I thought of nothing else. Could I have served you in any way, I . . ."

"All right, Gaudin, I know you would do all you could for me. But it is serving me ill to act in opposition to opinions you have heard me express so often. . . . We must learn to suffer for the cause of liberty We must listen to our enemies even when they threaten us. Nothing can prevent me from doing my duty as a citizen. Yesterday I stood up against the rioters; this evening I intend to be present at the meeting about to be held."

"What!" exclaimed the sub-prefect, "can you think of facing these fanatics?"

"Certainly, my dear Crânet. They shall see one faithful and resolute democrat, at any rate. I will discuss with them. . . ."

"They will refuse to listen to you."

"I am accustomed to disturbances in the Chamber."

"They are capable of using violence against you."

"At Lehrange—my own town? They would never dare!!"

"That was how Guise *Le Balafré* was killed," said Crânet, with a smile.

"Thank Heaven, I am not the Duke of Guise! Nor

has M. Stylb yet become King of France. I must enlighten these madmen as to their own interests and obligations. I will not hesitate in this, even though I risk my life in going."

"Ah! M. Didelod," exclaimed Guadin ardently, "if only these wretches could hear you now, how easily they would understand that it is you who are the real chief they should follow, not men like Stylb. . . ."

"Or Grangel!" said the commissary.

"Ah! you see, Gaudin. How often have I told you that Grangel was a rogue! Here he is, coming to terms with public agitators."

"It is a matter of great grief to me, monsieur, to find a schoolmaster setting such an example! All the same, he is sincere, and fervently believes everything he says."

"That only makes him the more dangerous. He is sowing poison in the minds of the children, whose parents are obliged to entrust them to his care, since we have closed the free schools. . . . Gentlemen, when I see such results following our secularisation programme I begin to wonder if we have done right in abolishing freedom of instruction."

"No, M. Didelod," remarked Gaudin, "what you did was necessary. Still, you should not have put the Government into the hands of the Socialists."

"Hush, Gaudin! they are all my friends."

"Nonsense! They are ungrateful rogues who are flinging you overboard. The reason they are in power is that you have helped them there. What are they all? Nobodies; petty provincial lawyers and doctors; seedy journalists. It is you who have pushed them

forward and financed them. Instead of remembering this and being grateful to you, they have allied themselves with your worst enemies. It is not the institutions that are bad in themselves, but men who, instead of respecting, strain and warp them."

"Calm yourself, M. Gaudin," said the sub-prefect; "your devotion to M. Didelod is leading you astray. We are here to obey the Government, not to criticise it."

The ringing of the telephone bell was now heard. Crânet listened at the apparatus, replying respectfully in monosyllables, then he said:

"M. Didelod happens to be here in my office at this moment, monsieur. Will you speak to him? . . . M. Didelod, the President of the Council is at the telephone. . . ."

Didelod walked up to the apparatus and, immediately taking the offensive, said:

"I hope, my dear friend, that you will give orders to prevent a recurrence of all these persecutions!... Are you there? . . . If you want to box up Stylb, don't put yourself out, I beg! He has come here to cause trouble. . . . One of these days you will have difficulty with him in Paris. . . . There will be no service held at Lehrange. . . . Good! The father has been guided by reason; he is a sensible man! Crânet has acted very wisely through it all. . . . I am well satisfied with him! Regarding the strike, I expect to get through with it alone, without any help. . . . Ah! you think I am mistaken, do you? Well, you will see. In any case, there must be no firing. I would rather have anything than that! I will let you know how things are going. Good bye."

The deputy left the telephone, rang the bell, and walked up to the fire-place with an air of considerable importance.

"This is what has been agreed upon," he said. "The soldiers are to remain in barracks. The funeral of Lieutenant Maubrun will take place in Paris. A delegation of officers, dressed as civilians, will accompany the body to the station. The brother of the deceased started this morning for Lehrange; he must have reached the house where the poor fellow is lying by this time. I will go there at once and arrange everything with him. Come along, Gaudin. I will see you again to-night," he added, addressing the commissary and the sub-prefect.

Whenever M. Didelod had business in town he was in the habit of going on foot about the streets. He knew everybody, stopped to speak to the women standing at the doors of their homes, and distributed coppers to the children. His popularity was great; to feel himself esteemed and loved had become a necessity for him. On the present occasion, as he went along the streets on his way to the Rue des Potagers, he had a vague sensation that a change had come over the feeling of the people regarding himself. The greetings he received were as frequent as ever, though not so cordial. There seemed to be present a general impression of uneasiness or regret. He spoke to several dealers, making inquiries about their business, and patted the children on the head. None of them —men, women, or children—gave him the hearty reception he was wont to receive. He remarked on the fact to Gaudin:

"You see, already they have adopted an attitude

of reserve towards me. It's those abominable military manifestations that are the cause of it. It is absolutely necessary that I manage my own affairs without any outside interference. Left to myself, I can easily get along with these good folk, who have known and esteemed me for the past thirty years."

"The country has changed greatly, monsieur, the last few months, and men's minds are now greatly troubled. The Neumans strike, which seemed to be of such trifling importance, was in reality only the first symptom of a very serious state of things, the full blossoming of which we are now witnessing. . . ."

"What! you, too, Gaudin, an alarmist and a croaker?"

"I listen to people, monsieur, who would not breathe a word in your presence. . . . I hear the prattling of children, who often repeat what they hear at home. . . . I tell you things are in a terrible state! Obedience is a lost virtue, and the sense of respect is at an end. It is unbridled egoism that has won the day; each one for himself and the weakest to the wall! The noble ideals of generosity and fraternity have disappeared; social solidarity is the phrase that is in every one's mouth. Each man, however, interprets it to his own advantage; no one cares to have it apply to others also. . . . In people's minds there has set in a kind of decomposition."

"I think you look at everything from too gloomy a standpoint," remarked Didelod.

"It gives me great pain, monsieur. I blush for my country and my fellow-citizens."

"To what do you attribute this deterioration of the moral sense?"

"The causes are many. At the head of them all I set the trades unions. . . ."

"Are you losing your senses, Gaudin? The trades unions! The finest and most important achievement of democracy!"

"Yes, so important that they will devour democracy, and, by giving the power of control into the hands of a few, create an oligarchy the tyranny of which will speedily become intolerable. In the second place comes anti-clericalism, which tends to do away with religion. . . ."

"The deuce! Gaudin, anti-clericalism is the first plank in the radical platform. . . ."

"That may be. But why are such obstacles set in the way of religious worship? Materialism altogether excludes morality. The idea of a Creator is most effective in bringing a feeling of security to the mind. You will never replace it by some vague, indescribable religion of humanity depending solely on charity organisations."

"Well, what next, Gaudin?" questioned M. Didelod.

"Next comes anti-militarism, one of the most dangerous follies with which the mind of man has ever been afflicted. No mercy should be shown towards those who profess this doctrine; they should be dealt with as public malefactors and transported to a convict settlement. Now just recapitulate all the causes of trouble that are leading this poor country of ours to decadence and ruin; we owe them all, alas! to the democracy. Add thereto the curse of alcoholism and and you have all the ingredients that fill the cup which is bringing France to intoxication and death."

"Continue, Gaudin; I should like to hear you right to the end. Evidently you are leading up to some conclusion."

"I am, monsieur, and one that is the result of much serious thought. I have long been uneasy in my mind; the progress of events did not satisfy me. I had doubts as to the excellence of democratic reform. It is said that a tree must be judged by its fruit; well, for the past ten years it has seemed to me that the results of the present regime have been most harmful and pernicious. Recent events have completely opened my eyes. France is on the downward track to ruin. But those who are driving the country from catastrophe to catastrophe are not democrats; that is where my mistake lay. They are demagogues. And trades unions are the most perfect form of demagogy the world has so far known. All the faults of the system are demagogical in their nature. One of the consequences is this system of each candidate bidding higher than his rival at elections, which is ruining the country and bringing it into disrepute. It is demagogy that must be held accountable for this."

M. Didelod had listened to Gaudin without a single sign either of approbation or of dissent. He continued walking to and fro, without uttering a word and with downcast head, as though overwhelmed by his own thoughts. Suddenly he struck his hands against one another and said, as though speaking to himself:

"It was Gambetta who foresaw the development of demagogy; had he lived, he might have succeeded in checking it. At all events, he would have fought

against it. Can it be that the plebiscitarians are right, after all, with their constitution drawn up in the American fashion No, no! that would mean a dictatorship, the rule of a Cæsar. And yet no one not a fool or blind could deny that we are rushing headlong to the abyss! This uncompromising secularisation has been pure madness. The separation of Church and State without the co-operation of the Papal See has proved a political blunder the consequences of which are incalculable. . . . The abolition of militarism in France will speedily give us into the hands of the Germans or the Collectivists. And it is the Government itself, rushing madly to its own ruin, that has done all this. There can be no doubt but that the vast majority detests and disapproves of these things, and yet cowardly allows them to take place. Consequently, it is a mere minority that is taking upon itself the responsibility for the disasters in store for us. It is evident that what a handful of agitators are now doing against me in my own works a band of sectarians are doing against the whole of France. At the present moment I am regarded as one of the most faithful adherents of these latter. Must light come to me through the flames of my own house? Am I only beginning to understand the public danger by experience with a personal one?"

"Monsieur," interposed Gaudin, alarmed at what he heard and especially at the troubled expression of his master's face, "do not form extreme conclusions from what I have had the audacity to tell you. I may have exaggerated, or be mistaken myself."

"No, no, Gaudin! you are not mistaken. You are

thoroughly honest, and you see exactly how things stand. Nor are you afraid of speaking out your mind freely through fear of displeasing me. It is that, above all else, for which I am grateful to you. . . . Enough of this for the present; I will reflect carefully on the whole subject. The situation is a serious one, but I shall not hesitate to face it and all its consequences."

They had now reached the house in the Rue des Potagers. Crossing the garden, they entered the vestibule, where they found themselves face to face with Lieutenant de Berlier and Maurice Didelod.

"Ah! father, you have come to see our poor friend, killed in our defence. . . ."

The blood rose to Didelod's face at the thought that his son had set down to the score of gratitude this visit due to so different a motive. He held out his hand to Maxime de Berlier, who stood on the reserve.

"Believe me, monsieur," said the young man, "when I assure you that my parents and myself symthise deeply with you in these disastrous happenings. . . ."

The deputy looked kindly at the officer as he replied:

"Thank you, Maxime; you're a good-hearted fellow, I see. . . . Yes, some of us are indeed passing through a crisis. . . . Has any member of the family yet arrived?"

"No. M. Maubrun has sent a telegram. He will reach Lehrange this evening."

"May I enter the room where the poor fellow is lying "

"Certainly, father."

Maurice opened a door, and there, stretched out on a camp bed, lay Lieutenant Maubrun, sleeping the sleep of death. Standing at the foot of the bed was Chauvin, the dead officer's servant. Seated by the side, with head bowed as though in prayer, was a young woman dressed in black, who rose to her feet at the approach of Didelod. The mayor looked intently at the pale, handsome face, so serene and grave. He, too, bowed his head and, more troubled than he wished to show, left the room. Out in the hall he asked his son:

"Who is that person who rose to her feet when we entered the room?"

"A friend of poor Maubrun who was greatly attached to him. Her grief is pitiful to see. She has asked to be permitted to stay there until the family arrives. Of course, we willingly gave consent. She is weeping and praying all the time."

"Is she a work-girl from the town?"

"Yes. Between ourselves, and perhaps because it is better you should know it, she is Tournemarie's eldest daughter."

"The deuce!" said M. Didelod. "This very Tournemarie has already been guilty of an attempt at murder against Lieutenant Maubrun, and. . . ."

"It is by no means certain that he is not the very man who killed this poor fellow yesterday, is it? Hortense Tournemarie thinks of all this, and her grief and anxiety are increased by her suspicions."

"Poor girl! Just ask her to come out for a minute. I should like to have a word with her."

Maxime de Berlier again opened the door and signalled to Hortense, who rose and left the room.

"Mademoiselle," said M. Didelod, "my son has informed me of your great sorrow and grief at what has happened. If I could lessen the pain in any degree, I assure you I would be very happy to do so. Do not fear to speak out to me; I place myself entirely at your disposal."

"You are very kind monsieur; I am greatly touched by what you offer me. But I have nothing to desire, since I have lost the man who was all in all to me. All the same, if you can free me from any search instituted by my father it would be a great relief for me."

"Are you under age?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"The deuce! What you ask me is something very risky. Your father has absolute authority over you. He can force you to return home, especially if your presence here is established. Without being at all puritanical, it is evident that your place is not in this house, though it appears quite natural to any sensitive being to see you here. . . . What you want, in a word, is to avoid meeting your father just now. . . ."

"Just now and always. I wish never to see him again. I would rather die than find myself in his presence! . . ."

"Come, come, my child, you must show a little more moderation and prudence. . . . Your father has serious grounds of complaint against you, though I can well understand you have no desire to meet him. Well, come along with me to Badonviller for the night.

You may stay there until you have decided what you will do. . . . You will be able to work for Mme. Didelod. . . . I think no one could find fault with such an arrangement. At all events, we can talk the matter over. Will this suit you?"

"Thank you, monsieur, I accept. . . . But so long as my poor Edouard lies here I will stay by his side. . . ."

"In all probability he will be taken away to Paris to-morrow by his brother. . . ."

"What! Will the funeral not take place at Lehrange?" asked Maurice.

"No; in the present state of tension the family wishes to avoid any cause of trouble. . . ."

"So we shall not be permitted to pay him the final honours he so well deserved?" said Maxime de Berlier.

"You may do as you please in Paris, my dear fellow; but at Lehrange we must prevent the spark from bursting into a flame. One victim is quite sufficient; let us not make others."

"Then I will ask for permission to follow him to Paris," said the young girl gently. "There will be few to mourn for him, I see; at any rate, he shall not be deprived of my tears."

She returned to the room as M. Didelod, greatly moved, went out into the garden. The two young men accompanied him without a word. There they met Gaudin, who was patiently awaiting his master. The former took Maurice aside.

"I think you had better accompany your father to Badonviller" he said. "He is greatly moved, far more than he would like us to imagine, and declares

that he will go this evening to the strikers' meeting. I should not like him to go there alone. . . ."

"I will accompany him, Gaudin; rely upon me."

"These are troublous times we are living in, Monsieur Maurice. Your father did not deserve to be treated so badly. . . ."

"When a country is in a state of anarchy, Gaudin, you must not look for justice. It will do my father a world of good to go through this trial, however painful it be. He will again open his eyes to the light and discover where the truth lies."

"Ah, Monsieur Maurice, what a reactionist you are!" remarked Gaudin.

"Yes, Gaudin, I am passionately fond of order and regularity in everything; nor can I admit that the ignorant should rule, and rogues and villians domineer over us. Would you consider it right that the young urchins of your school should presume to teach you? This is exactly what is happening to my father at the hands of his own workmen. Compared with himself, they are mere scholars, and yet they wish to lord it over him under the pretext that it is numbers that count. Well, my father is very near to regarding all this as quite natural. He must be brought to close quarters with these men; his sturdy common sense must be roused to revolt by the very absurdity of their claims, so that he may come back to us convinced by reason—as he is by feeling—that we are right. I am tired, Gaudin, of being at variance with my father, whom I respect as well as love."

"Ah! Monsieur Maurice . . . such grounds of variance exist in almost every family. Children no longer

think like their fathers. . . . It is that which is ruining France."

"France cannot be ruined; she is the purest inspiration and source of human intelligence. We will deliver her from the imposters and charlatans who are exploiting her on every hand. Afterwards she will resume her march in the direction of progress."

"May it be as you say!"

"But then, you see, Gaudin, perhaps things may not progress of themselves; it is quite likely that blows will be exchanged. And, really, they must not be the same shoulders which receive them all the time."

M. Didelod put an end to the conversation as he shook hands with Lieutenant de Berlier. Turning to his son, he said:

"Are you coming with me to the Town Hall, Maurice? The carriage will be waiting there, and we will return together. . . ."

"Very well, father; in a quarter of an hour I will be with you. There are a few things Maxime and I have to attend to here. Go along with M. Gaudin and wait for me. Don't leave my father, M. Gaudin."

"Why! what are you afraid will happen to me in Lehrange?"

"Oh! nothing, I suppose. Still, I shall feel more at ease if you are not alone."

"Very well, I'll see you shortly."

M. Didelod left with Gaudin. On reaching the street he remarked, with a slight tremor in his voice:

"Maurice is a fine fellow! If only he would be a

little more serious he would have a brilliant future before him, both in business life and in politics."

With a shake of the head, he added:

"But if the present state of things continues in politics there will soon be no more business life at all!"

CHAPTER IX

FACING THE MUSIC

THE concert hall of the town of Lehrange was built by M. Didelod, on a fine plot of ground, belonging to himself, situated in the centre of the town. It was used for public and private meetings, balls, speeches, banquets, and theatrical performances. Political meetings were also held there, as well as prize distributions. Here the meeting, that had been well advertised, brought together the strikers of the Didelod and Neumans works. At the back of the hall, on the stage, was a table surrounded by arm-chairs, awaiting the committee. The lighted chandelier spread a harsh glow over the audience, who had been in their places since eight o'clock, banded together in accordance with their professional departments and political affinities. In the third row, surrounded by the most ardent of their partisans, sat Stylb, Grangel, and Tournemarie. Dense clouds of tobacco smoke were already filling the air, rising slowly to the ceiling, there to be absorbed by fan-lights. All kinds of shouts, and questions, and jests were being exchanged and bandied about. Then came alternations of violent and revolutionary songs, threatening and reckless in nature. When the half-hour struck Stylb rose to his feet and raised his hand to call for silence.

"It is time, citizens, to form the committee. There

is no need for me to ask you to prove, by the choice you will now make, how important you regard the present state of things. To offer greater guarantee that there will be freedom of discussion I propose to nominate Citizen Grangel to the chair. . . . His official capacity will be a sure pledge of his impartiality in the eyes of our opponents."

Amidst loud cheers could be heard, "Yes! Yes! Grangel! Grangel in the chair!"

The schoolmaster rose and mounted the steps leading to the platform. With professional gravity he took his seat, and immediately entered upon the duties of his office.

"Citizens," he said, "we had better choose two assessors. I move that we appoint Citizens Gorgeau and Terrasson. . . . Will those in favour kindly raise their hand. . . . Citizens Terrasson and Gorgeau are unanimously nominated as assessors."

The two workmen who had been chosen, easy, good-natured fellows, dressed in their Sunday clothes, took their places by Grangel's side. As though to show their satisfaction of this commencement of the proceedings, the whole audience burst into the "Internationale." The chairman, however, entering seriously into his part, struck on the table at the end of the first verse, and with a stern glance at his listeners said:

"Citizens, we have assembled here on important business. Popular songs are all very well at the right time. This evening we have to discuss the question of the relations existing between workmen and employers, from the standpoint of labor contracts. There is no need for me to inform you that the whole

well-being of the proletariat is contained in the saying, 'As you make your bed, so you must lie on it.' Then you had better ensure your own means of livelihood, with respect to your employers. In future the Collectivist regime will undertake to give you full satisfaction. For the present, however, considering that the state of social progress is scarcely more than at its beginning, it is your business to defend your own interests."

These words were welcomed with bursts of energetic applause. It seemed from the very commencement that the chairman would have sufficient authority to control the discussion effectively. Stylb, from a distance, nodded approvingly to Grangel. The schoolmaster continued:

"The question thus being put, would any one like to address the meeting?"

"I should," said Tournemarie.

As he spoke he made his way to the platform. Hortense's father seemed to have aged ten years within the past few days. His full, round cheeks had become hollow, and his jovial countenance was beginning to assume a harsh, forbidding expression. He threw his cap on to the table, and advancing to the edge of the platform, was on the point of beginning his speech, when a considerable stir made itself felt in the audience. This was followed by profound silence. M. Didelod, accompanied by his son and Gaudin, had entered the room. Without even glancing at those present, he walked straight to the front row of seats. The prestige of the master still operating, several workmen at once rose to their feet with the utmost eagerness, saying:

"Come this way, M. Didelod; here is a seat for you."

The member for Lehrange calmly accepted this mark of deference, and, flanked by Gaudin and Maurice, took his seat. Thus he chanced to find himself on the side opposite to that in which Stylb was lording it. Then M. Didelod glanced at the board, turned to the assembled people, and showed no astonishment either at seeing Grangel in the chair or Stylb, who had no business at the meeting, as he was neither a workman nor even a Lehrange elector. Seeing that Tournemarie stood there, motionless and silent, he said aloud, as though giving the order to begin:

"We are listening!"

Grangel reddened with anger at this high-handed encroachment on his prerogatives. He struck on the table, and turning to the speaker, said:

"We are listening!"

"Citizen Tournemarie will begin his speech."

Whereupon Tournemarie began:

"Citizens, if the promises made to us had been kept we should not now be met here, for which I should have been very glad. After deceiving us with the promise that a labour contract would be accepted by our employer, our would-be protectors have found themselves incapable of forcing him to adopt it. True, the same interests that paralysed the good intentions of M. Neumans made of no effect the ardour of M. Didelod. These two employers, once together, instead of discussing the means by which we may obtain satisfaction, doubtless were exclusively engaged in thinking over the best methods by which

we might be induced to believe that the moon is one huge cheese."

This accusation, so clearly formulated, was received with a burst of applause from every part of the hall. Finding himself so vigorously supported by the audience, Tournemarie continued:

"I was one of the workmen's delegates sent to M. Didelod, who had offered his services as arbiter between ourselves and M. Neumans. He gave himself out to be the protector of the poor, the friend of the weak, and the defender of the labouring classes. He served up to us once more the typical electoral speech, full of honeyed phrases of the kind you know so well, from having so often been deceived by them. We were the future of democrocy, the living might of France, and all the flattering things he could think of to cajole the electorate. And what is the outcome of all such balderdash? Nothing at all! M. Neumans has kept out of sight; he has buried himself, pretending to be dead. And we are again like poor Hodge; all our great expectations have vanished, and we are without wages to feed our wives and children. The future of democracy is a fine thing, but it has nothing to do with the necessaries of everyday life. Day by day we must have our daily bread, and bakers' bills cannot be paid with mere words!"

"No! No! He's right! Bravo, Tournemarie!"

"Believe me, citizens, I have not mounted the platform on this occasion merely for the purpose of finding fault. I am here to account to you for the mandate with which you entrusted me. I was not a delegate to the member for Lehrange solely for the pleasure of having a chat with him, but to obtain,

in favour of the workmen, reforms and concessions which have often been promised, but which they are still waiting for. As we could not obtain, privately, from M. Neumans an acceptance of our programme, it was our mission to obtain it by means of arbitration. First of all, however, we came out on strike. Long since have we discovered that any claim that is not backed by energetic action is an object of ridicule to our exploiters. Consequently, it was to our interest to obtain a speedy solution, as we found ourselves without wages whilst negotiations were proceeding. In addition, we had founded the most legitimate expectations on the intervention of M. Didelod, mayor of Lehrange and Socialist member for the district. You shall hear shortly how these expectations have been deceived."

M. Didelod's voice, clear and loud, could be heard saying:

"I will answer you."

"I hope you will," replied Tournemarie, "for it is absolutely necessary that the electors of Lehrange as well as your own workmen should learn what meaning you attach to the protection of the proletariat. To return to the negotiations which had been entered upon by way of arbitration with M. Neumans. In the first place, he was requested to take back the workmen who had been dismissed for having upheld the interests of their comrades. It is a matter that deserves consideration, by the way, to note that employers look upon those workmen who oppose them as enemies of whom they must rid themselves as speedily as possible. To stand for the interests of the working classes, one's own family, so to speak,

is a crime; one would think that workmen had been brought into the world solely for the purpose of serving the whims of employers, just as sheep are reared for the purpose of feeding men. Are we nothing more than slaves? Must we submit without resistance to the law of a master? Cannot we discuss our own interests without incurring the ostracism of an employer? And yet this is what happens. The man now on this platform speaking to you, because he has interested himself in his comrades' affairs, has been branded as a ringleader by M. Neumans, and as a ringleader is a person who merits death, the gates of the firm will remain closed upon him, even when the strike is over and all the others have resumed work. A ringleader is the black sheep of the flock. He is driven from pillar to post. And it is just because his brothers in toil and poverty, acting in accordance with a spirit of justice and solidarity, have repudiated such dealings that the strike continues. Can you conceive of any measure, at once more tyrannical and barbarous, one that combines more effectively the underhand methods of preistcraft and the brutal traditions of capitalism, than such a system of boycotting? Not only can the object of such treatment not return to his own work, but work elsewhere is refused him. He is stamped for ever a ringleader! Do you think that Didelod, who calls himself a Socialist, is affected by such a state of things? Has he brought to bear on M. Neumans such pressure as would be calculated to overcome his opposition? He employed false reasons and honeyed words, and proved himself quite incapable of forcing the hand of M. Neumans. He blamed him and was vexed at

his obstinacy, but his personal influence ended where M. Neumans' will alone could come into play. And you all know the result: a strike that is impoverishing half the population of Lehrange. Thereupon Didelod's workmen, acting in accordance with a spirit of solidarity, joined the strike movement, with the object of compelling their employer to show that he was not merely a Socialist in words, but in actions as well. Terrible was the spectacle that followed and which you all witnessed; a Socialist using his influence to have the military called out and hurled against the proletariat. After all sorts of philanthropic declarations, M. Didelod has had the workmen attacked by the hirelings of capitalism, and this peaceful town blood-stained with hideous slaughter and butchery."

"And yet it is the soldiers who have come off worst!" shouted a voice in the crowd.

A furious howl replied:

"Out with him! He is a spy!"

Half the audience was now on its feet, with clenched fists, as they shrieked, "Down with the army!" Grangel, purple-faced, and with eyes wavering to right and left behind his glasses, struck on the table to obtain silence, and said in cutting accents:

"Listen to all that is said, and do not check any manifestation of opinion."

"Yes, yes!"

M. Didelod, rising to his feet, said:

"Far from wishing to boycott our friend Tournemarie, I am willing to find a place for him to-morrow in my works if he cannot get back to his former work at M. Neumans'. . . ."

"Oh! Oh! Bravo, Didelod!" shouted the audience, changing sides in a moment.

At this retort Tournemarie grew pale with indignation. Striking his breast, he turned on the deputy an angry glance, as he exclaimed:

"A public meeting argument! I am a cabinet-maker; you know perfectly well there would be no work for me at your place. . . ."

"Why not? Joiners are required in the work-sheds. . . . But perhaps you would regard it as coming down in the world if you ceased to make furniture. . . . Still, you would earn as mch. . . . Anyhow, you need not say that I starve you, or attribute ugly tendencies towards proscription to those who have struggled for liberty all their life. See here, Tournemarie, I am liberal to such an extent that, in spite of all the pretty things you have been saying about me, I am ready to welcome you to my home, without bearing you any grudge whatever."

At these words, which won for M. Didelod a round of applause, Tournemarie appeared overwhelmed with dismay. He was quite unprepared for such a proposal, which abolished the whole effect of his diatribe. He stood there, furious and disconcerted, incapable of thinking of anything that would enable him to act once again on the offensive. It was Stylb who drew him out of the hornets' nest into which he had fallen.

"Doubtless it is quite touching to hear of M. Didelod offering to find employment for one of M. Neumans' workmen. It would be more interesting, however, to learn what he intends to do for the workmen of M. Didelod himself."

In a moment the former state of things was restored, and the audience, brought back to the sentiment of their own grievances, turned away from the member for Lehrange and stoutly supported Stylb.

"Do not be concerned regarding my own workmen," replied M. Didelod. "I shall continue to supply them with everything compatible with the effective progress of my business. It is known to all that at Lehrange the workmen are well provided for, and that the profits do not all go to the employer. . . ."

"How does M. Didelod reconcile his Socialistic opinions with his position as an employer of labour? Can there be any question of sharing profits between workmen and employer, when the suppresion of the latter is the very first demand of Socialism, and along with it the restoring of the means of production to him alone who uses them: the workman?"

"Ah! so that is how the question is put, is it?" asked M. Didelod, with a smile. "I no longer need explain the part I have played in the Neumans arbitration; all I am called upon to do is to defend my private property against the formal claims of Collectivism. Citizen Stylb used the word Socialism, but what he meant is Collectivism. It is the organisation of the society of the future that is being talked about. Well, though I maintain that it is possible to be a Socialist without believing in the Utopia of Collectivism, still I am fully prepared to discuss with you the programme recommended as destined to regenerate humanity, and which, if adopted, would hold in store for you nothing but deception and misfortune."

With threatening gesture, Stylb retorted:

"We shall see about that!"

The audience shouted out:

"Platform! Citizen Didelod to the platform!"

A violent uproar followed. A portion of the audience, consisting of the workmen of M. Neumans, demanded the termination of the discussion on the subject of the strike. The majority, however, eager to listen to the explanations offered by the member for Lehrange, imposed silence on the cabinet-makers. Tournemarie, who was visibly in a rage, turned to the chairman to demand the right to finish his statement. Grangel, under the influence of Stylb, wavered.

Amid a tumult of shouts, M. Didelod mounted the platform, and Tournemarie had to come down. Silence was at once restored. The member for Lehrange was quite accustomed to public speaking, well able to approach a question and develop it, profiting by interruptions to turn them to his advantage. Perfectly calm and self-possessed, he began:

"I do not think it has yet become necessary to attach serious importance to the claim made by our friend Stylb that the workmen should have placed at their disposal the means of production by the process of dispossessing the employers. It would be more interesting to investigate, loyally and with one accord, into the advantages the workmen may obtain, with the object of making their occupation easier, on the one hand, and life in general more interesting and attractive for them, on the other. It is to the study of these questions—which I must insist on calling social questions, in spite of the opinion of Citizen Stylb—that I have devoted my best efforts and most

careful attention. All of you here are too well acquainted with the conditions of work in general not to appreciate the advantages you enjoy—advantages you would not find elsewhere. I do not say, remember, that the benevolent way in which you are treated should make you limit your claims, for the thought of chaining you to myself with the bonds of gratitude has never entered my mind. I merely consider that what I do for you is my duty, and that you owe me nothing in return. But there is a wide gulf between this and making impossible the exercise of my industry through the extravagance of your demands. It is this gulf—into which your would-be friends and advisors, in their blindness or folly, would gladly hurl you all headlong—that I wish to point out to you, so that you may turn aside from it of your own accord. Just consider what you are told: that the employer of labour, who does not work himself, but instead controls the work of others, lays aside for himself the greater portion of the profits resulting from labour, and whilst the workman receives his paltry wages, the employer is piling gold into his coffers. I will then examine, with your kind permission, this relationship between master and man, and we shall see how the sharing out of the product of this common labour is effected. You number six thousand workmen at Lehrange, and the average wage amounts to five francs per day. Every working day, consequently, there goes out of the funds of the establishment a sum of thirty thousand francs, bringing up the amount to nine hundred thousand per month, and over ten millions per annum. Add to this the salaries of clerks, overseers, and engineers and you

obtain a total of eleven million francs or thereabouts, which must be found before any remuneration can be granted for the capital invested in the business, the work of the employer himself and the divers taxes—amounting to an enormous sum—which we are forced to pay to the State. Now keep in mind this sum, eleven millions, which go into your pockets before anything whatever is deducted, and which represent your share in the general result of the enterprise. Indisputably you deserve this sum, for which you have laboured from the beginning to the end of the year. Still, this is not the sole product of your work; in its realisation there have entered other elements which we have no right to neglect or leave on one side. Let us consider this for a moment. Understand me well, dear friends; I have no intention whatsoever of giving you a lecture on political economy or entering upon some vague, transcendental study of the relations existing between wages and capital. No; I wish simply to explain to you that the establishment itself, with its engines, tools, and stock, its control and management, has its part also in the production of profits, and consequently merits a share in their distribution. There are not only workmen at Lehrange, there are sheds and tools, coal and metal, all the accumulations of several generations, and these represent the capital of the undertaking. This latter begins in a very small way. The original Didelods were scarcely more than workmen themselves, but instead of squandering their profits, they kept them by the exercise of strict economy. Rather than indulge in comfortable surroundings, they purchased land, constructed sheds, fitted up engines, dug

mining shafts, developed their works, and consequently increased both their trouble and their expenses. But at the same time they added to their profits. For there is a law of productiveness that it is impossible to infringe, and capital as well as labour must receive its remuneration."

"There I do not agree with you," interrupted Stylb. "The capitalist is a usurer who eats up the labourer out of house and home. Capital ought to belong to labour under penalty of extortion. . . ."

"Then let labour constitute a capital . . . of which it will have possession. . . ."

"That's what we want. . . ."

"By creating it. . . ."

"Impossible under present social conditions. The capitalistic system ought to be forbidden by law as a crime against the spirit of Collectivism. It should be made impossible for capital ever to be owned by an individual. It is not for nothing that we are determined no longer to tolerate private property; we are determined to abolish it forever."

"By securing it for yourselves?"

"Certainly!"

"That is downright robbery."

"It is the recovery, by means of labour, of reserves of capital, heaped up by the fraudulent and criminal exploitation of wage earners."

"By virtue of what right?"

"By virtue of a right we shall establish. It is not unjust to take back for the people what has been created by the people. Everything comes from the toil of the workers; therefore everything ought to make them returns. Nothing should be deducted

from the product of their toil for the profit of any one. Just as we have no longer a sovereign or a divinity over us, so we ought not to have an employer of labour. We live on the earth, bound down to it, watering it with the sweat of our brow, and finally returning to it for our everlasting sleep. The earth ought to give us every material satisfaction possible. Our work ought to be limited to what is strictly necessary for the maintenance of life. . . . The workman has only one ideal. . . ."

"That of doing nothing at all!"

At this retort, which escaped from the lips of M. Didelod in his irritation, there arose a frightful tumult in the room. Threatening cries and insulting shouts were hurled at the member for Lehrange. Stylb, pale with fury, moved about uneasily in his chair, speaking loudly to his neighbours on either side. Grangel was striking vigorously on the table in an effort to restore silence. It was M. Didelod who was the first to make himself heard. He shouted out above the noise:

"You are incapable of tolerating contradiction, and can do nothing but make an uproar. How can you expect any one to discuss with you? . . ."

Silence ensued, and he continued his speech:

"What you have just been listening to is a theory advocating plunder and spoliation. To take from your neighbour's pocket his watch and purse is an easy matter, on condition you are stronger than he is. To dislodge the owner of a house and set oneself up in his place is less difficult and takes a much shorter time than building a house for oneself. What we have to learn is whether the dictates of honesty and

justice allow of such actions taking place. Hitherto the law has been opposed to them. Citizen Stylb and his friends, in their eagerness to enjoy the good things of life, wish to take purses, watches, and houses by main force. So long as there are the police to rely upon this glorious dream of theirs will never become a reality."

"Armed force; now the murder's out! Armed force, the sole safeguard of capitalism!" exclaimed Stylb.

"Sole protection of honest citizens against thieves and robbers," retorted Didelod.

"There are no thieves and robbers but monopolists and capitalists! What! Whilst a whole nation is suffering from privation and want, a small number of wealthy individuals, a band of hateful plutocrats keep a right grip on the whole of the public fortune, using it to add to their scandalous luxury and profligacy. On the one side, we see a few privileged persons in possession of everything, whilst, on the other, the vast masses of the needy and wretched have nothing at all. Is this justice? I am willing to grant that men born into these so-called upper classes defend this inequality, that haughty and violent idlers claim that the advantages of their position be maintained; but what are we to think of M. Didelod, the would-be Socialist, who can talk of nothing but revolution and progress, social emancipation and freedom? That is too glaring and ridiculous, too abominable a state of things to continue. We must put an end to such a scandal. We cannot admit that the name of the people be used for the sole purpose of exploiting them. One must be either

for the people or against them. A truce to hypocrisy! Either you shall acquiesce in the minimum of the demands of your own workmen, or we will expel you from the party. And you will go to join the men to whom you really belong, the most detestable of reactionaries!"

A perfect storm of hurrahs arose, and violent was the stamping of the feet throughout the room. The dust that began to appear was so dense that the contracted faces of the audience could only be seen as through a mist.

Didelod shouted out above the din:

"Explain yourself clearly, and without any extravagance of language. What is it you want?"

"A labour contract!"

"What would be the terms?"

"An eight hours working day, the election of twelve workmen delegates, whose duty it would be to superintend the work-sheds, the suppression of piecework, the closing of the *Economat.*"

"The eight hours' working day is impossible until there is an understanding in all the works throughout the country for the regulation of competition. You may have the election of twelve workmen delegates, starting from to-morrow, if you wish. It is yourselves who would suffer most from the closing of the *Economat,* as it was instituted in order to make living easier for you. Still, it competes with local trade, and its disappearance would make little difference, after all. Pass on to the suppression of piecework; that would result in the making of all wages uniform. It would mean that the idle, incapable workman would be paid at the same rate as the one who is

industrious and intelligent. That is an injustice to which I could not consent."

"The incapable workman has to eat as well as the capable one."

"But the latter would cease to take pains with his work if he were no better paid than the former."

"That's our business, not yours."

"The work would deteriorate in quality, and that would make it my business."

"You are an exploiter."

"And you utterly insane!"

"The eight hours' working day and no more piece-work."

"It would mean the decay and ruin of the national industry."

"We are talking of Lehrange, not of the nation. Reply!"

"I cannot agree."

"Then prepare yourself for a strike! an out-and-out strike!"

"Take care!" said Didelod, looking boldly at the menacing multitude.

"He is threatening us! Down with Didelod! Down with him!"

"If you compel me to close the works I will not open them again!"

"And all outstanding orders you will have executed at Steingel, I suppose?"

"In Germany? Scoundrel! Away with him!"

"Ah! so you will have us all to die of hunger, you heartless wretch! You will manufacture on the other side of the frontier, you robber! Well,

we'll do for you first, we'll take your works from you!"

From the body of the room chairs came crashing with a terrible noise on to the platform. Grangel, in utter dismay, was on his feet, shouting injunctions which no one heard. Gaudin and Maurice Didelod, hurrying to the stairs, made a breathing space in the exasperated and disorderly rabble. Tournemarie, armed with a bludgeon, let fly at Gaudin a back-handed stroke which covered the face of the school-master with blood. Maurice, standing on the steps, gave Tournemarie so vigorous a blow with his fist full in the face that the cabinet-maker fell backwards into the arms of his friends. Thereupon an attempt was made to rush the platform. Grangel and his assistants flung themselves in front of Didelod. A struggle at close quarters ensued, blows were exchanged, and the air was rent with the shrieks and cries of the combatants. Gaudin and Maurice, one on either side of the member for Lehrange, dashed forward like madmen and made a clear space in the middle of the room. Didelod, hustled about and struck on both sides, with cravat torn away and hat beaten in, was carried in Maurice's arms to the door.

Here a band of strikers, grouped about the exit, burst upon them, and the scuffle became more desperate than ever. Didelod, hurled against the wall, felt his breath giving way. He was on the point of falling to the ground, as he shouted "Assassins!" but was sustained by his son, who pressed against him, showering down blows on his assailants with indomitable courage and strength. Of a sudden, in the confusion, the light went out and the com-

batants were plunged into utter darkness. At the same time Didelod felt himself being dragged away from the crowd. After a few rapid steps he distinguished a feeble light, and found himself in the basement, between his son and the tenant of the building.

"Thank Heaven, M. Didelod!" said the latter. "You are out of it at last!"

"The villians!" exclaimed the mayor, breathing with difficulty. "But where are we?"

"Below the stage. I succeeded in pushing you through a small door, after turning off the electric light. You will find nothing to equal darkness for calming people down. I have never yet seen a crowd, however turbulent, recover from a switched-off electric light."

"What has become of Gaudin?" exclaimed the member of Lehrange. "He has been left behind to the tender mercies of these madmen. They are capable of killing him."

"I will go and see."

He left Maurice and his father alone in the dimly lit cellar. As they stood there listening to the howlings of the mob they looked at one another.

"Are you not hurt?" asked the elder of the two, pressing his son's hand between his own.

"No father, not in the least! But what of you?"

"Oh! just a few bruises. . . . The worst blows I have received have struck me to the heart. The ungrateful cowards! To disown and treat me in this fashion!"

Tears streamed down the mayor's eyes; he was humiliated and wounded in his most cherished beliefs.

His son pressed him to his breast, endeavouring to console him.

"They have been deluded and led astray. They cannot think what they say, and certainly they must be sorry for what they have done."

"Yes, they will be sorry, but it will be too late! I now see clearly into their minds, and find that they are not yet ripe for progress. They understand nothing outside their immediate interests. They are the sport of ringleaders, and these latter may be the most detestable characters imaginable, as we have seen this evening. The soul of the people, alas! deprived of ideal, has become atrocious. What a task we have set before us in attempting to enlighten these men, taking with us nothing but the torch of reason! Now the human brute has been let loose. Who is to tame it?"

The tenant of the building returned. He was alone.

"Do not be anxious about M. Gaudin," he said. "He is in my room and is recovering."

"So he has been hurt?"

"Rather seriously, though there is no danger. The skin above his right ear has been torn away. I will have it dressed."

"Poor fellow!"

"He is concerned solely on your account, and implores you to leave at once, with M. Maurice. But then, I must inform you that the carriage, which was standing at the door, has been broken to pieces, and that your coachman and the horses are being hunted through the streets of Lehrange."

A sorrowful smile came into Didelod's face. With a careless wave of the hand, he said:

"That is the least important of all the injury they have done me to-day. Well, Maurice, once the street is clear, we will leave on foot."

"If you will allow me, M. Didelod, I will drive you home in my gig. That will be safer than returning on foot."

"Thank you; I accept your offer."

"I will harness the horse. There is a door here at the back, by which you may leave quietly."

Whilst father and son, in the manner described, came safe and sound out of the riot, the most violent of the mob, under the leadership of Stylb, Tournemarie, and Grangel, had scattered about the streets, shrieking and singing, to the terror of the wealthier portion of the inhabitants, thus rudely aroused out of their first sleep. A few windows were flung open, and vague, dim forms appeared, against which stones were hurled, to the accompaniment of insulting cries. Tournemarie, his face swollen with the blows he had received from the hand of Maurice Didelod, brawled out:

"To 'The Pineapple'!"

A procession was formed, consisting of a hundred of the most desperate characters among them. They reached the inn, woke up the landlord, had the lights turned on, and called for drinks, threatening that they would smash everything on which they could lay hands if their command was refused. Stylb immediately mounted the table and began to speak:

"I feel certain, citizens, that you no longer have any illusions left regarding the Socialism professed by your employer and master."

"He is our master no longer!"

"That is for the future to decide. Many and many a time have the working classes thus formulated with the employers a definite rupture, but it has always been of a very precarious nature. You make fine resolutions on the spur of the moment, but you lack perseverance, your opposition grows less and less, and finally you give way. . . . In this way the capitalists have always got the mastery over you. This time, however, you have a unique opportunity of showing that you can be firm. Your employer is also your deputy, and the most ambitious of men. You are his electors, and you hold his parliamentary fate in your hands. In his relations with you it is not only his industrial, but his political fortune that he risks. Consequently, what is about to take place in Lehrange will be of special importance. The entire working classes throughout the land will have their eyes fixed upon you. In reality it is Didelod's ambition which will be fighting for you against himself. As employer he will be forced to disarm, if he does not wish to ruin for ever his popularity as deputy. Think what power this gives you, and be prepared to profit by it."

"But suppose he shuts his works, as he threatens?"

"You will call upon the Government to have them opened."

"The recess is on, so the question cannot be raised."

"All the better! We will act in revolutionary style: propaganda by deeds. We will resume work without Didelod and wait until the Government intervenes."

"Meanwhile Didelod is quite capable of passing

his orders on to Steingel, as he has already said he would do."

At these words Grangel rose to his feet, his face aflame with indignation, and said in piercing tones:

"Then we will go and request our brothers, the German workmen, to have nothing to do with so criminal and dastardly an enterprise, but rather to make common cause with us against the enemies and exploiters of humanity! Peacefully, and with open, outstretched hands, we will proceed to Steingel, there to carry through the task of unity and solidarity."

"What if we are stopped on the frontiers?"

"Who will stop us? The custom-house officers of Alsace-Lorraine? They will be overswayed by our peaceful, friendly mission. . . . It is no more than an hour's march. We will take the women and children with us; in that way the demonstration will assume its true nature. If we succeed in persuading our toiling brothers to refuse to help forward such abominable projects as are being meditated against us, our cause will have taken an immense step forward in the direction of internationalism."

"Yes, but is it to the interest of the Germans to help us?"

"Would they be Socialists if they refused?"

"But what if they were Germans before all else?"

"What a foul aspersion!"

"Do you forget what their leaders have always affirmed? They formally repudiate internationalism in everything concerning war. They declare themselves to be, above all else, patriots. At recent congresses they have put forward strange resolutions in honour of a Germany greater, stronger, and more

prosperous than the present—a rather unusual explosion of exclusiveness, don't you think? With these noble ideas of devotion to a world-wide cause that we are expressing, don't you think we run the risk of being duped? Is it not rather foolhardy to rely on the disinterestedness of the Germans in a matter that concerns French industry alone? Your conception of an appeal to the solidarity of the working classes is rather naive. You show yourselves sentimental, when it is our own interests we have to consider. Take care. . . ."

These words of wisdom, pronounced by a Lehrange overseer, raised a storm of protests from the strikers at the Neumans works, who were bent on resistance, and determined to adopt only the most vehement of solutions. Tournemarie, whose rage was only increased by the pain of his swollen face, mounted in turn on to the table and shouted out:

"Are you men? You know what I have done. Well, I am ready to begin again! How shall we succeed in crushing opposition if we hesitate before the very first obstacle in the path? There are no peaceful revolutions, I tell you; we must throw down before we can build up again. It is not moderation that will help you to change the social order of things. Courage! If only each of us is faithful to his duty, the future is ours!"

At this point the maddened audience began to shout and sing the "Internationale," spreading terror and dismay throughout the district. With uplifted arms, brawling mouths, and angry, threatening glances, the mob, in this atmosphere reeking with drink and tobacco smoke, offered a spectacle of terrify-

ing brutality. A blind force had been let loose, ready for every possible deed of violence. When the revolutionary song was at an end Stylb again began to speak:

"So you are determined to resist with the utmost energy these projects of Didelod's, projects so utterly destructive of liberty?"

"Yes! Yes!"

"Very good! All the same, I advise you to be prudent as well as energetic. All useless disorder must be carefully checked. See to it that this is so. It is unnecessary to alarm the population of the town, or make them evil-disposed against you, so we must have no aimless manifestations, no empty, meaningless shouts. To-morrow the officer who has fallen a victim to the strike will be taken to the station by his comrades. Leave them alone, make no protest, and keep away from the ceremony. This dead man has nothing more to expect from us, neither curse nor blessing. In a word, his life has been sacrificed by the leisured classes he defended. He was in our way; we removed him; there is no more to be said. Let him go down in peace into the earth, and at the same hour we will meet at the other end of the town and march on the Didelod works. Once there we will decide what to do. If we think fit to proceed to Steingel, we have only the frontier to cross, and within an hour we reach the Reismann establishment. Do you agree to my programme?"

"Yes!"

"Very well! To-morrow morning at ten we meet at the bridge outside the town, and go from there

to the works. Now let each one return home, silently and in perfect order."

The crowd dispersed; Stylb and Grangel remained behind. The innkeeper came up for their orders. He had not been paid for the drinks consumed and was growing uneasy. Stylb placed forty francs in his hand and then went out with the schoolmaster into the silent street. They stopped for a moment to breathe in the night air, so cool and soothing as they issued from that hot, reeking room. They walked along without a word. In the distance could be heard the steps of their companions, with their dull, heavy tread on the pavement. At the corner of a narrow street they suddenly perceived the approach of a figure dressed in black. They waited, and soon recognised the priest of Lehrange, with a little girl by his side.

"Eh!" exclaimed Grangel, with a sarcastic laugh, "it is very late for you to be going into the town. . . ."

"My ministry is not limited by fixed hours, M. Grangel," said the priest gravely, recognising the schoolmaster by his voice.

"Where are you going now?"

"To offer the consolation and help of religion to a poor man on his death-bed."

"Great good may it do him, if he believes in your mummery!" jeered Stylb.

The priest looked attentively at the one who had just spoken.

"Doubtless, monsieur, if one may judge by your words, you are one of those who have recently deprived me of my salary, dismantled my church, and

ruined M. Didelod's works. Great good may it do you, also! But what you have not been able to take from me is the confidence of my parishioners; you have not succeeded in destroying hope in a God ever ready to help. Look above; there are lights in the heavens which no human hand, however powerful, will ever be able to extinguish!"

The priest touched the shoulder of the little girl, who had stopped also and was standing by his side.

"Come along, my child; your father is suffering; we must not keep him waiting. Good evening, messieurs."

He uncovered his head, exposing to the view of the two men a mass of snow-white hair, and, along with his little guide, was soon lost in the darkness.

Grangel and Stylb, left alone once more, maintained a profound silence. Their eyes, as though attracted by some superior power, were fixed on the shining and motionless stars twinkling in the immense firmament. Struck by this perfect harmony, this grandeur and mystery, they continued their way, considerably disturbed and perplexed in mind.

CHAPTER X

THE MAILED FIST

HORTENSE TOURNEMARIE, in accordance with M. Didelod's invitation, took refuge that evening at Badonviller. The servants had just finished dinner when she reached the château. Laurence's maid, in obedience to orders received, quietly conducted the young girl to the room that had been prepared for her. Thus she was prevented from meeting the other servants, all of whom were indignant with the strikers, prompted as they were by a feeling of class distinction to a sentiment of profound scorn towards mere workmen. During the course of the meal they had commented on the day's events; their invectives had been very severe against the assassin of Lieutenant Maubrun. At bottom their employer's misadventure with his workmen was anything but displeasing to them! all the same, they looked upon their personal comfort as being in jeopardy, as the result of the strike, which might well bring trouble into the Didelod family. It was on this account that they pronounced energetically against the movement.

The house-steward, a fine-looking man with carefully trimmed beard, had declared authoritatively that the workmen were "a regular low lot," with whom there could be no possible social order, and that "if he were the Government" he would not tolerate for a moment such infamous conduct as had recently

taken place. After all, he would predict that my lord Tournemarie would speedily be under lock and key and transported to Cayenne, there to meditate at greater leisure on the social question. The arrival of Hortense had brought a certain element of constraint into these outpourings of opinion. Mademoiselle Didelod, however, had taken the precaution to keep the poor girl from being brought into contact with any of the servants of the house.

Early the following morning, after a sleepless night, Hortense asked for permission to go to the town. She wished to purchase a veil of black crape before proceeding to the small house in the outskirts, where the short ceremony authorised by the prefect was to take place. She received full liberty to absent herself, and the maid, at Laurence's behest, handed over to her a certain sum of money. With tears in her eyes, the young girl muttered her thanks and, without speaking to any one, set out in the direction of Lehrange. The shops were beginning to open when she arrived. She entered a draper's where she was well known. The shopkeeper and his assistants were partaking of their breakfast cup of coffee when she appeared. From the street Hortense could hear them gaily chatting and laughing; no sooner, however, did they see her than they became grave and silent. The contrast between their present attitude and their jovial demeanour of the previous minute was so striking that Hortense stood there abashed. She looked at these men who were casting constrained glances at her, and she wondered if her grief was so evident as to attract the attention of indifferent persons, or if the secret of her attachment to the victim

of the strike had already become public property. After buying her veil and a pair of black gloves she left the shop without daring to ask for an explanation. In front of the building, the entrance to which was already draped with mourning, stood a picket of dragoons on guard. Chauvin, the orderly, led her into the house. Here, with no inquisitive glances to disturb her, she sat near a window looking on to the garden, though now the blinds were drawn. At last she could pray and weep freely. About ten o'clock was heard the heavy tread of men carrying the coffin out of the house, then low-toned voices, the pawing of horses' hoofs on the gravel, and the sound of various voices indicating the arrival of the mourners. Then came words uttered in louder and more regular tones, from which Hortense gathered that brief speeches were being delivered before the officer's coffin. She recognised the voice of M. Didelod, who was extolling the ideal of discipline, in honour of which Maubrun had died. Then came a silence, followed by the chanting of psalms. The listeners were not so attentive to this portion of the ceremony as they had been to the speeches, for beneath the very window at which sat Hortense, trembling and confused, a conversation had been begun, the murmured sounds of which reached the young girl's ears. Overwhelmed by her own grief, she was paying no attention to what was being said, when the name of Tournemarie, twice repeated, broke in upon her meditation. Listening attentively, she heard the following scraps of conversation:

"He had already tried to assassinate Maubrun, and had it not been for the sudden onset of the dragoons from the barracks, this very Tournemarie would now

be under lock and key. His comrades, however, set him free, and there cannot be the slightest doubt but that it was he who fired the revolver-shot which killed poor Maubrun. . . ."

The heart of Hortense seemed to stop beating. Her mouth opened to utter a cry of horror as she heard her father accused of being a murderer. Not a sound escaped her lips. She wished to rise to her feet and go out, to question and see with her own eyes those who bore such terrible testimony. Strength now failed her. Exhausted by the prolonged anguish and crushed by this unexpected blow, her arms beat the air and darkness came over her eyes. Sinking back into her seat, she lost consciousness. On returning to her senses everything was silent; the procession had left for the station. Rising, she went out into the hall, where she saw the black trestles from which the bier had been removed, sinister and gloomy amidst all the verdure and flowers. She cried aloud; whereupon Chauvin, who had remained behind to guard the house, ran up, a look of eager compassion on his face.

"What! mademoiselle, you still here I thought you had left for the station along with the rest. Were you not to accompany my poor lieutenant to Paris?"

Hortense gave the orderly a look of anguish as she said in low tones:

"That is what I had wished, but I do not think I have any longer the right."

"Why not?"

"Chauvin, have you heard any mention made of the man who killed your master?"

"Oh! there are people who rack their brains to invent all kinds of . . ."

"I am speaking of a distinct and definite charge, not of a piece of slander. Have you not heard that my father has been accused of firing the shot . . ."

Unable to finish the sentence, she sank, sobbing, to the ground. Chauvin hurried up to her.

"Come, come, Mademoiselle Hortense, if one were to believe everything people say . . . In such a bustle and crowd . . . how can any one say exactly what took place? . . . I was present, but I swear to you I would not venture to accuse your father. . . . True, he had made an attempt the previous evening, and was certainly anything but favourably disposed towards my master. . . ."

"They say there was only one shot fired . . . and they affirm it was fired by him, and, in all probability, such is the case. . . . Besides, is it not enough to have people saying, 'It was Tournemarie who murdered him,' without my being exposed to the risk of being recognised following the coffin of his victim? . . . And his brother is there; I cannot appear before him. . . ."

She had ceased weeping; her countenance had assumed an expression of pained gravity. Seated on a bench in the garden, she began to reflect: "What is to become of me now? what kind of future is in store for me? I cannot possibly meet my father face to face, and yet I have not the right to leave my family. My mother and sister are not responsible for what has happened; they will only need me the more if father is going to be taken from them. If he is arrested, as he probably will be, his condemnation is certain to follow. Our wretched condition will only be increased by the contempt and scorn under which

we shall suffer. No indulgence is shown for the relatives of a murderer; people even go so far as to attribute to them the responsibility for the crime. There is no limit to human injustice; it is prejudice that governs the world. It is not only my love, but also my self-respect that will receive a mortal blow. I shall be douby my father's victim."

She was interrupted by Chauvin saying to her:

"You must not give yourself so much trouble and anxiety, Mademoiselle Hortense. My master would be very displeased were he to see you so."

A melancholy smile flitted over the girl's face at the soldier's *naïveté*. Her ideas were speedily converted into another channel by Chauvin's next remark:

"Come along with me into his room. No one except myself has yet entered, so if there is anything among the things he used every day capable of giving you pleasure, I will take upon myself to give it to you in memory of him. . . ."

"Oh, thank you! Let us go there at once!"

They reached the room, where everything was arranged in perfect order. On the table lay a few cigarettes, the book he had been reading, and an ivory paper-knife. Photographs of Maubrun's father and mother were on the mantelpiece. A small, old-fashioned timepiece of mother-of-pearl, with copper inlay, continued to chime the hours its poor master would no longer pass on earth. On a small table near the bed was a little silver match-box engraved with the initials "E. M." How often had she seen him take up that box to light his cigarette! Turning it over in her hand, she said:

"I should like to keep this box."

"Take it, Mademoiselle Hortense; it is a mere trifle."

"It is quite sufficient; I should not care for anything valuable."

"Ah! my master knew you well; he always said he had never met any one more disinterested than you were."

Overcome with emotion, she took her leave of the orderly, went down the stairs, across the garden, and out into the street. Here she made her way in the direction of the station. On reaching the Town Hall square she saw a number of people collected. Hortense stepped on one side so as to escape notice. Between two policemen dressed in plain clothes, and followed by a hundred loungers and all the scum of the town, she recognised her father. He was walking along, pale and bareheaded, with disordered clothes, as though he had been engaged in a desperate struggle before being arrested. The police were holding him tightly as the crowd of idlers behind shouted, "It's the murderer! It's Tournemarie!" An angry leer appeared on the face of the workman, who darted furious glances at his pursuers and passed along without a word. Police and prisoner disappeared in the Town Hall. The mob collected before the door, making comments on the arrest. Hortense, broken-hearted, passed on her way. Reaching the station, the entrance to the platform was guarded; but this woman, dressed in black, was evidently one of the party. The general, sub-prefect, and entire staff were standing about. An open luggage van was waiting to receive the bier. M. Didelod and his son were talking

to a young man in mourning, whose family likeness to Maubrun proclaimed him to be his brother. All around Hortense they were talking of indifferent matters, everyday life and its duties and cares seeming to engross the attention of these men, brought together by a common social obligtion The member for Lehrange was saying to young Maubrun:

"It will take you five hours to reach Paris. That will allow you plenty of time to have the corpse transferred to the church. . . ."

"My father will be at the station to receive us. . . . It will be a great effort on his part, for he is anything but well. . . ."

The sub-prefect walked up to M. Didelod and, in tones thrilling with satisfaction, said:

"I must inform you, M. Didelod, that the prisoner has just been arrested. He is now in the Town Hall, from where he will be transferred to prison. . . ."

"Where did you find him?"

"At home. He had the audacity to return there as though nothing had happened. . . . He offered considerable resistance; four men were needed to take him away, to the accompaniment of the cries and shrieks of his wife and children. Luckily, that business is over. He could easily have reached Belgium by the Ardennes, in which case we should have been accused of conniving at his escape."

The sound of a horn interrupted the conversation. A locomotive, which was being shunted over the lines in front of the train, slowly drew up and was coupled by the railway workmen. All on the platform came closer together and removed their hats. Four porters

took up the coffin, which they pushed into the luggage-van. Profound silence followed; then the sliding door was closed, and Hortense stood there, with burning temples and heart like lead, in front of that van which contained her life's happiness. Dark despair took possession of her. In a flash she caught a glimpse of the terrible future awaiting her—the abandoned family, the children wretched and hungry, the father in prison, the wailing mother embittered by the trials of life. She had not sufficient strength to bear such a weight of grief. As the signal for starting was given and all the rest drew back, suddenly she took two rapid steps forward and flung herself on the line in front of the train. A cry of horror burst from the lips of all present, who expected to see the young girl crushed into a shapeless mass by the wheels, when, quicker than herself, Maurice Didelod sprang forward and pulled her back. In the eyes of the poor girl everything became black; the station buildings turned round with lightning rapidity, and a dull buzzing sound filled her ears. She fainted as the train, increasing speed every moment, disappeared round the curve of the line.

On regaining consciousness she found herself in the stationmaster's office. M. Didelod was holding her hand.

"Well, my dear child," said the deputy, "you gave us a terrible shock! Come now, you must show yourself more reasonable than this. . . . The deuce! you have any number of friends. . . . We will not forsake you. . . . Yes, I know. . . . You are heart-broken. . . . Alas! such is life. . . . But think of it: you fling yourself in front of a train in presence of

all the men of note in the place. . . . Come, you'll promise to be good for the future, won't you? Otherwise I shall have to see you in the hospital and have a watch kept upon you. . . . We have duties to fulfil towards our fellow-citizens, and you particularly are deserving of interest. Speak to me; don't sit there without uttering a word. . . . What can I do for you?"

In trembling tones, Hortense replied:

"Promise me you will not abandon to their fate my mother and sisters when they no longer know which way to turn."

"But you will be there to help them, my child. . . . Besides, you may rely upon me. . . . I willingly promise to do whatever I can for them. . . ."

"I know how kind and generous you are. . . . Promise, too, that you will bring no charge against my father, and will try to save him if it is possible to do so."

"I will send for a lawyer from Paris to defend him," declared M. Didelod, greatly touched by the gloomy entreaties of the young girl, who seemed as though she was no longer in the land of the living.

"God bless you, M. Didelod. I will pray for you with all my heart as long as I live."

"That will be a long time, will it not, my child?" said he, with a feeble attempt at a smile.

Hortense shook her head without replying, and made an effort to rise. She stood up, not without difficulty.

"Shall I call some one to accompany you home?" said Didelod, anxious at the thought that she was returning alone through the streets of the town.

"No thank you, monsieur. I will go on foot. It will do me good to walk."

"Then come along with me."

Opening the door, he led her on to the platform and out of the station. Once more she said good-bye, thanking him earnestly, and slowly went away. For a few moments he followed her with his eyes until she disappeared amid the trees. Then he made his way to the carriage, where Maurice was awaiting him.

"Poor girl," he remarked, "she is in a sorry plight! You have saved her life, though I doubt greatly whether that is a service you have done her. She is haunted with the idea of death, and sooner or later. . . ."

Entering his phaeton, he said to the coachman:

"Drive to the Town Hall; I must see that rascal of a Tournemarie. . . . Then we will go and see how Gaudin is getting along, so as have a pleasant impression to finish with."

. . . . . .

At the same hour, in front of the entrance to the Didelod works, a crowd of workmen, accompanied by their wives and children, had assembled in the open square, planted with stately elms. There did not appear to be a single human being in the establishment. Stretched out in the sun, before the office door, lay a huge mastiff belonging to Maurice Didelod; he did not even deign to lift his head. The lofty chimneys, whose summits were usually enveloped in dense black streams of smoke, now rose, cold and bare, into the sky. Silence, solitude, and abandonment were what the strikers at Lehrange discov-

ered to have replaced the usual bustle, movement, and life. Stylb and two delegates rang the bell. The porter answered the summons and came forward to speak to the visitors. Though he knew them all by name, he affected to treat them as strangers.

"What is it you want, messieurs?"

"To speak to M. Didelod."

"He is not here."

"Could we see the manager who represents him?"

"He is at home, unwell."

"Then is there no one?"

"M. Cottereau, one of the engineers, is in his office. Shall I ask him if he can receive you?"

'Yes."

The porter disappeared. The crowd had settled down on the sloping banks of the square beneath the trees, and were beginning to partake of the lunch they had brought with them. It was eleven o'clock. As every kind of demonstration in France, of however violent a nature, always preserves an air of popular gaiety, the threatening movement against M. Didelod that had been decided upon was beginning with a picnic on the grass. Stylb and his two companions waited, walking to and fro in front of the gate, which remained shut. The mastiff was still sleeping in the dust. Finally the porter returned, opened the gate, and said:

"Will you follow me?"

The three men entered. Once within the yard, the two workmen said banteringly to the porter:

"So you don't know us now, Müller?"

"I don't know people who have taken upon themselves such an ugly piece of business as that."

As he spoke he pointed to the burnt and calcined walls of the office buildings.

"That's a thing I could never have believed you capable of, for instance!"

"You know quite well that it was Neumans' men and the rabble of Lehrange who set fire to the place."

"All the same, you have now joined issue with them. 'Birds of a feather flock together'!"

Opening a door, he waited for them to pass in, and then said:

"Wait here. I will let M. Cottereau know that you have come."

He left the room.

"The big chief keeps away," said Stylb.

"Weli, I am not surprised, Citizen Stylb, after last night's meeting. M. Didelod is not accustomed to be jostled and knocked about, I can tell you."

"He has not yet come to the end. Employers everywhere are now entering upon a period of trouble and difficulty."

"He will lock us out, as he has threatened to do."

"We will take the sheds and fit up a co-operative concern."

"Who will supply us with the necessary cash in hand?"

"The State. It will now be compelled to undertake great financial reforms."

"Are you aware that millions of francs are needed to keep a huge concern like this going?"

"We shall get them. Besides, you, too, will receive your share of the profits, instead of slaving all day long from the beginning to the end of the year, all to

bring additional wealth to a capitalist employer of labour."

"None too soon, either!"

Müller interrupted the conversation.

"M. Cottereau is ready to receive you."

They entered the engineer's office as he was adding the finishing touches to the drawing of an engine. He rose to his feet, waved his visitors to a seat, and, addressing the two workmen, said:

"What is it you want "

"We wished to speak to M. Didelod."

"Then you must go to Badonviller, though not before evening. Just now M. Didelod is at Lehrange station witnessing the removal of the body of M. Maubrun, the officer killed at the works."

Stylb, irritated to find that the engineer spoke to the two workmen and seemed to have made up his mind to ignore his very presence, insolently interrupted the conversation.

"We cannot go and hunt up M. Didelod on the public highway. . . . Surely he has an office. . . . head-quarters of some kind? . . ."

"Wherever he is," said M. Cottereau, "I do not think he will be willing to receive you."

"Why not?"

"Because it may suit him to meet his workmen, whom up to the present he has treated as friends; but he will never consent to discuss with men like you, who are inciters of riots and creators of discord and trouble. . . ."

"Ah, indeed! You are not very polite!"

Cottereau looked Stylb full in the face.

"Ah! the rôles are now inverted, you see! Be-

sides, we have had quite enough of you recently. Your two companions are good fellows, after all, though they have been led astray by your evil counsels. They will be always received with indulgence, but as for you . . . Come! there's the door! Trot!"

"There! you hear how those who undertake your defence are treated!" exclaimed Stylb to the two workmen, who stood by in frigid silence.

"Not another word!" interrupted Cottereau. "Walk out by the door, or I will help you through the window!"

He was a fair-haired and robust native of Lorraine, thirty years of age, who could have felled Stylb with a single blow of his fist. The strike-fomenter was unwilling to risk his prestige in so unequal a contest. Turning pale, he stammered out:

"We shall meet again!"

"Yes, when there are two thousand of you!"

Opening the door, he hustled Stylb right into the passage, and stopping the two workmen, who tried to follow their leader in single file, said:

"Are you not ashamed to obey such a contemptible coward? Is it for rogues of this kind that you risk your peace of mind, your future welfare, and even your daily bread?"

"Ah! M. Cottereau, the master has been most uncompromising! He has granted us nothing we asked of him."

"Your demands were impossible."

"What will he do now?"

"He has already told you: shut up the works."

"And go over to Steingel?"

"Of course. The orders must be executed. On

German territory he will gain thirty per cent. on raw material alone. You are mad, utterly demented, to have driven M. Didelod to the necessity of crossing the frontier."

"When will he open the works again?"

"He is not likely to open them at all. You have outraged him abominably, insulted and struck him."

"If he does not open them it will be war to the death! We will go in a body to Steingel."

"Don't do that!"

"Why not?"

"M. Reismann is not a philanthropist like M. Didelod. He will not look upon the matter as a jest, but will have you shot down like vermin. At Steingel you are no longer in France. Beware!"

"Well, we shall see! Good-bye, M. Cottereau."

"Remember that I have warned you. If M. Didelod were here he would give you the same advice. Take care."

"Good-bye."

They left the office. In the courtyard Stylb was waiting for them, fuming with rage.

'Well, you have taken your time! What has that blackguard of an engineer been saying to you? Has he been trying to tell you your duty?"

"He advised us not to go to Steingel."

"A proof that you ought to go."

"He swears they will shoot us down."

"What stupid nonsense! What pretext would they give? Do you think the German Government is anxious to have the whole of the working classes against it by shedding the blood of men and women on a message of peace? . . . No! you run no risk at

all. If Steingel refuses to yield to your demands, M. Didelod's position as Reismann's partner becomes impossible. Politically speaking, he is ruined forever."

"And you will take his place?"

"I hope so, for your own sake."

The two workmen looked at one another. That moment afforded them a perfectly clear insight into Stylb's treachery: they saw that they were his victims. Now, at last, they guessed the selfish intrigue that had been woven by this unscrupulous politician, with the object of obtaining Didelod's seat in Parliament by the aid of a popular riot, even though blood were to flow. Their habitual timidity and lack of spirit, however, stopped them even with their mouths open to give utterance to expressions of reproach and accusation.

"Come along!" said Stylb. "Forward!"

With bowed heads and troubled minds the two workmen followed him.

Corks and bottles were scattered along the road; white paper bags dotted the turf here and there. The crowd, which had set off in angry and violent mood, had at this moment forgotten its resolutions and unreservedly given itself up to rejoicing. M. Didelod was far from their thoughts. During the calm of the meal, in that happy feeling of general well-being caused by a satisfied appetite, all bitterness had vanished. If their employer had arrived on the spot just then with coffee, brandy, and cigars, he would in all probability have been cheered. The fickle mind of the mob was equally ready to harbour friendly as hostile feelings. It was Stylb, however, who appeared before them, indignant at his recent disappointment, embit-

tered by the insult he had swallowed, and secretly uneasy at the evident coldness of his two companions. He felt the necessity of rousing that wavering mass of humanity to a white heat of indignation.

Mounting the slope by the roadside, he said in harsh, grating accents:

"Well, friends, whilst we are loitering on the way the master of Lehrange does not hesitate; his orders have already been passed on to Steingel. Your works are closed, and the subordinates confess that M. Didelod is determined to give you a lesson, and that it is more than probable he will not open again."

A prolonged murmur rose from the crowd, whose faces began to grow dark and sullen.

"Consequently, it is more than ever necessary to call upon Steingel not to enter upon a course of disloyal and murderous competition. Working France, interested in the struggle commenced between your employer and yourselves, will follow the various incidents of the strife, and will not fail to side with the workers against those who exploit them. The manifestation, then, that you are about to make will be a decisive one. Even though you were to stain with your hearts' blood the infamous agreement concluded between Didelod and Reismann, you still owe it to the cause of the proletariat not to hesitate now, but to march boldly forward. Forward! To Steingel!"

They had now all risen to their feet with furious and threatening gestures. Shouts and insulting cries filled the air, exciting to a state of frenzy minds already overheated.

"Follow me!" ordered Stylb.

Placing himself at the head of the column, he made

his way along the high road leading from the works in the direction of the narrow plain separating France from the German Empire. The women and children had lingered behind to place the baskets in order under the trees. The men, from seven to eight hundred in number, had gone on in front and were singing at the top of their voices to keep up their courage. They left the works, enveloped in a cloud of dust; at the other end of the plain, covered with rich grass on which lay numerous sleek cattle, rose the tile roofs of Steingel. Across the path also, five hundred yards from the works, there appeared a black line, which was immediately seen by those of the rioters who had gone through their military service to be a troop of cavalry drawn up in order. The steel of accoutrements and the brass of helmets shone in the sun. Silent and motionless, they waited at the end of the path before Steingel for the arrival of this French mob which was now marching over the annexed territory of Alsace.

Suddenly a dull feeling of constraint succeeded the high spirits that had been evident at the start. The march, however, was continued, perhaps even in a more hostile and provoking spirit than before. Stylb was no longer in front; he had allowed the more ardent spirits to pass him, and was now walking by the side of the column. On reaching a distance of a couple of hundred yards from the troops no further illusion was possible. A squadron of hussars blocked the way; a little ahead of the line a group of civilians were engaged in conversation with the officer in command of the detachment. The procession continued to advance without the faintest hesitation, but in per-

fect silence. Suddenly the officer of hussars raised his arm, and a trumpeter in the rear sounded a shrill blast. At the same time one of the civilians, accompanied by the officer, drew near; the rioters recognised M. Reismann himself. He walked straight up to the men from Lehrange, his expression being far from reassuring. Coming up to within ten yards of the first line, he passed in front of the officer's horse and took up his stand in the middle of the road.

"For what purpose have you come here?" he asked.

Stylb, to do him justice, did not quail before the emergency in which he found himself. Standing up to M. Jules Reismann, he replied:

"We have come to appeal to the solidarity of the workmen of . . ."

He was not allowed to finish the sentence. M. Reismann interrupted him.

"You! Be good enough to hold your tongue! You are not a workman, nor do you even belong to the district. I will not listen to you."

"Then no one else will speak."

"Very well, it shall be as you say: no one will speak. Major, I call upon you to do your duty as a soldier."

The commanding officer, a vigorous young horseman, trim and smart in his pelisse, with ruddy complexion and bristling, fiery moustache, saluted and said in French, with a very pronounced German accent:

"It is commanded that all crowds disperse immediately the three summons have been given, under penalty of arrest as ordained by the law."

He gave an order to the trumpeter, who blew a second blast.

"You hear," said M. Reismann, "this is no jesting matter. Here you are on German soil; in the empire discipline is strict. On the other side of the frontier it appears you can make light of a soldier's life. Here you had better use no bricks or stones to hurl at the military, for you will be answered by sword-cuts and revolver-shots. I have been informed that you were coming to Steingel to seduce my workmen by spouting to them the idle nonsense of demagogues. At once I sent for the cavalry. I might have left you to make a beginning, and then avenged my brother-in-law, Didelod, for your insults and violence against him by having you shot down like rabbits. That I was unwilling to do. Thank me for my indulgence towards you and do not try my patience too long. Now go quietly and in order, and never let me see you again!"

"Liberty! Fraternity among workmen! Social solidarity!" shouted Stylb.

The whole column repeated after him the noble words, often so unworthily employed.

"Third summons!" said the harsh voice of M. Reismann.

The trumpeter sounded his instrument once more. Immediately the major gave a brief command, and the soldiers rapidly wheeled round and deployed in perfect order. For a moment the path was free, M. Reismann and the officer alone being there.

"Forward!" shouted Stylb.

"Forward!" repeated a hundred maddened voices.

Springing ahead, the strikers rushed in the direc-

tion of Steingel, hustling M. Reismann. The major stepped in front of the latter, shouting out in piercing accents the command "Vorwärts!" In an instant the hussars charged the column on both flanks, cut their way through, and, bearing down on their horses upon this mass of scattered humanity, now flying in every direction, they cleared the road, in the middle of which stood M. Reismann, surrounded by a small body of civilians who had accompanied him. That was a tragic moment when the German cavalry hurled itself upon the French crowd. Race and blood hatred manifested itself in a furious charge. The hussars, with swords brandished in the air, shouted hurrahs as they came on with clenched teeth and faces red with anger. No attempt at resistance was offered by the rioters, who were swept away like dust before a violent gust of wind. Cries of despair came from the stream of fugitives, hurling curses at the traitors and insults as their assailants. M. Jules Reismann stood there impassive, scornfully shrugging his shoulders. From the position in which he now found himself, the spectacle of that maddened crowd in flight, pursued by the hussars, was at once pitiable and grotesque. On the ground, so hastily abandoned, lay scattered quite an assortment of hats and caps left behind in the precipitate helter-skelter. Even pairs of shoes had been thrown aside. Bounding forward at a gallop, amidst the scurry of escape and the clinking of steel, the hussars pressed close on the heels of this human mass now in utter rout, helping on their flight by the aid of an occasional blow with the flat of the word. They were all by this time in headlong flight, energy and courage quite gone. The

youngest and most active seemed to speed along on wings; those not so nimble fell to the ground, utterly exhausted and breathless. Following the track, escorted by his trumpeter, the major, with sword sheathed and whip under his arm, trotted quietly along, a look of disdain on his countenance.

On reaching the frontier he halted and waved his hand. The trumpeter sounded the rally. Abandoning the pursuit, the cavalry quietly formed into a column, once more blocking the road. On French soil and therefore safe, the fugitives, all the same, had not calmed down; panic-stricken, they had run right on to the Didelod works. The women and children, who had lingered behind in the avenue, suddenly heard a mighty uproar and saw a howling and terrified crowd, who even now imagined they heard the galloping hussars behind them and the slaps of the flats of the sabres on their backs. Carried away in this whirl of terror, ignorant as to the danger from which these men were escaping in frenzied haste, the children and women lost their heads and, raising horrible shrieks, added to the disaster and confusion. Without a halt, the stream of fugitives crossed the plain. On reaching the Verveille bridge they regained self-possession and calmed down. At first, tired out and breathless, they were incapable either of thinking or of speaking. Then, suddenly overcome with shame on finding themselves back in their native town, and seeing that they had traversed the whole distance without being pursued, these men wished to give some explanation of their terror and disorder. They shouted out to the idlers who collected round them:

"The Germans! The hussars! They have crossed

the frontier! They drew their swords upon us. Revenge!"

They were hurrying across the bridge when, at the other end, near the town, a black form was seen approaching, and the men at the head of the column suddenly came to a stop as they recognised Hortense Tournemarie. Bareheaded and with a face pale as death, she was advancing towards the strikers. On reaching within earshot she shook her fists at them as she exclaimed:

"Cowards! you can only show yourselves bold against your own countrymen! You have run away from the Germans! So they defended themselves, did they?"

A threatening murmur rose from the crowd at this insulting reproach. Without appearing to notice it, the young girl continued:

"Why did you not try to kill them, these foreign horsemen? You reserve your savage ferocity for your own brothers! Dogs and villains! you have been dealt with to-day according to your deserts! You have run away, howling for mercy, without even offering any resistance!"

"Peace!" exclaimed the crowd, now lashed to fury. "Hold your tongue!"

"I will not hold my tongue! Do you think you can make me afraid? Where's your assassin-in-chief? Where is my father? It seems you are not capable of killing any one without him!"

"Wretch! Another word if you dare! Take care, or you'll soon be with the murdered man yourself!"

"Ah! I would be with him willingly if only I could send you before me! You revolutionary ver-

min and Socialist scum! You pack of thieves and assassins!"

Shouts interrupted her:

"She is mad! Yes, she has lost her reason! Muzzle her!"

"Why don't you massacre me? I am alone and defenceless! That would be a fine piece of work, well worthy of you!"

As though bent on exasperating them beyond measure, she walked up to the rioters, daring them to do their worst, insulting them by word and deed. She was terrifying to behold, the very incarnation of hate and scorn in their most threatening aspects. These rough workmen well understood her. Barely recovered from their alarm, they advanced upon her in menacing circles, as though they would have liked to avenge the humiliation of their flight upon this wretched girl now loading them with insult and shame. They had no consideration for their comrade's daughter, no regard or pity for her grief and recent bereavement. Before them stood only an enemy, recalling to them their own ignominy and disgrace.

"Enough! If you do not hold your peace we will fling you into the Verveille!"

Mockingly she jeered:

"You would never dare!"

As she spoke she sprang upon a stone seat which rose half-way up the parapet. Head and shoulders above the crowd, she added:

"After all, I will spare you the trouble!"

With a violent toss of the head her long tresses fell about her convulsed face, like a black pall.

"I would rather die than live in disgrace, the daughter of a murderer, amidst a pack of cowards and wretches like you! My blood be upon your heads!"

Scornfully she spat upon them, raised her hands as though in a final curse, and, striding over the stone ledge, leapt into the river. A cry of horror arose, and an immediate reaction took place in the minds of these men, who were really far more quick-tempered than evil-disposed. The more active among them had already hurried down to the bank of the Verveille. The unhappy girl's body, half hidden beneath the surface, had caught on the stones of the pier, the head having disappeared in the current. A boat, rapidly rowed to the spot by three men, landed at the foot of the arch, and the wretched girl was seized by her black dress and dragged out of the water. A prolonged moan of pity and distress rose from the crowd leaning over the parapet of the bridge. A stream of blood was flowing along the hair of the frightfully battered head of Tournemarie's daughter. In her fall she had broken her skull, and it was a corpse that the boat brought back to the bank. The three men improvised a bier with their oars, and, remounting the bank, proceeded slowly in the direction of the town. The crowd followed behind in silence, gloomy and oppressed. In the sad end of this poor girl, a victim, as her father and Maubrun had also been, of the disastrous and fatal strike, all saw an omen of misery, suffering, and death.

CHAPTER XI

LOCKED OUT

IN the large *salon* of M. Didelod's mansion in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, in Paris, lunch having come to an end, M. Jules Reismann, who had just returned from the Kiel races, was relating with a wealth of detail and Germanic emphasis all about his cruise, his encounter with French yachts, and his match with the English cruiser "Edinburgh." Listening to him, in addition to the Didelod family, were the Marquis de Berlier and his wife, who, by a revolution in the wheel of politics, had become once again their dear friends of former days. Laurence, Maxime, and Maurice, all together in a corner of the window, were paying but little attention to the member for Steingel as they watched the motor-cars fly along in the direction of the Rue Royale.

"I was left a minute behind by the English yacht," said M. Reismann. "The Kaiser, however, was more fortunate the following day, and came in first for the cup. I was more delighted than if I had carried off the prize myself."

"Yes, indeed! Listen to him!" muttered Maurice. "He would have given a hundred thousand francs to have beaten his Kaiser!"

"It is incredible," said Maxime de Berlier, "that any man should be capable of losing his nationality

to the extent that M. Reismann has done. He has become a German to the very marrow. Neither in his ideas nor in his expression of them is there any trace of the Franchman left."

"He drives this transformation to extremes," added Laurence, "by affecting the most utter scorn for his former country whenever an opportunity offers. Were he not my uncle, I should say that he is the very incarnation of a renegade."

The young men laughed at the comparison drawn.

"Fortunately for himself," remarked Maurice, "he really is our uncle."

M. Reismann, interrupted in the middle of his narrative by this outburst of gaiety, had turned to the young people near the window, and asked in an irritated tone of voice:

"Are my remarks so very comical, then?"

"Oh! not by any means!" replied Maurice, in a tone of the most perfect conviction.

Noticing the irony concealed in his son's answer, M. Didelod cut short any possible debate with the words:

"Come into my room, my dear fellow; we have serious matters to discuss together."

Saying which, he led his brother-in-law out of the *salon*.

At the end of the two months during which the works had been closed the situation at Lehrange had undergone a singular change. At first, in the fury of their rebellion, the workmen had held a series of stormy meetings, at which they had stoutly declared they would resume work only on the conditions for-

mulated by themselves. A violent Press campaign had been entered upon in the Socialistic journals against "that Prussian, Didelod." The "Tocsin" of Verdun had published a more than usually insulting article against the member for Lehrange. Maurice had immediately betaken himself to the offices of the journal and struck the editor in the face. The following morning he pierced his shoulder with a sword-thrust in a duel. This proof of vigour had lowered by several degrees the polemical tone taken up by the other papers, and M. Didelod had subsequently been exposed only to such insulting remarks as are allowed to pass muster between people who do not share the same opinion. Stylb, breathing out rage and hatred, stayed at Lehrange, encouraging the resistance of the men, doling out scanty sums of money to the ring-leaders, though prodigal with words and promises to the bulk of the workers. The Government had taken alarm at a situation which gravely compromised the peace and tranquility of a whole province, and negotiations had been entered into with the member for Lehrange. The latter, however, indignant with his political friends, whom he accused of not having supported him, had received every advance with the utmost coldness. He declared in plain terms that if those in power were unable to maintain order in the Lehrange district, he would undertake, all alone, to bring to their senses the fomenters of trouble and disturbance. The Ministers, after such a rebuff, had appealed to the President of the Republic, who had summoned M. Didelod to the Elysée and shown him the utmost attention and consideration.

It was all to no purpose, however. The member

for Lahrange was stubborn and determined; he insisted on having the last word, and no person or thing in the world would prevent him from continuing to defend his course of action. All the same, though furious with friends in Parliament, he was proud and happy beyond expression at the attitude of his son. This youth, whom he had hitherto looked upon as vain and empty-headed, had improved wonderfully in his father's eyes. His conduct during the affair at the works, his courage at the public meeting, where he had certainly saved Gaudin's life, and defended his father in so energetic a fashion, the duel with the editor of the "Tocsin," in a word, everything he now said, which was so reasonable and thoughtful, all this had given M. Didelod the highest opinion of Maurice's character. He was now glad to consult him and take his advice, and even to entrust him with delicate business negotiations. He would declare, "Maurice is a true Didelod." This was great praise, coming, as it did, from a man who was firmly convinced in his own mind that the Didelod family was born to dominate their contemporaries and to rule over France.

The first result of this good understanding between father and son had been the restoration to favour of Maxime de Berlier. M. Didelod had not been able to refuse his son this recall of the exile. It amounted to a tacit consent to the plans formed by Mme. Didelod and the De Berlier family. The marquis had not been mistaken. When matters during the strike were at their worst he had shown his friend the warmest tokens of esteem and affection, which were gratefully welcomed by M. Didelod. The latter, disgusted with

the Socialists, had felt drawn nearer to the reactionaries. Maurice had said jestingly:

"The danger is now in the other direction!"

M. Reismann had stormed out:

"Surely you don't intend to continue to be used as a milch-cow by all these false friends?"

M. Didelod had locked his money-box with a double turn of the key. If Stylb continued to oppose him in his own town, at all events, it was no longer with his money. Besides, business was going ahead splendidly. The output of the Steingel works was doubled and all orders were executed. The French customs gained by this arrangement by reason of the imports. The strikers, however, were beginning to tighten their belts in doleful fashion; nor did they welcome with the same enthusiasm the assurance regularly given to them that M. Didelod would be forced to give way, and that, if he did not, the State would relieve him of his works and hand them over to the men themselves. At the meetings there were certain poor wretches who, with pinched and hungry faces, were beginning to say:

"What should we do with his works if they were handed over to us? We could not manage the business."

"The State will supply you with engineers," replied Stylb.

"What difference would there be between the engineers of the State and those of M. Didelod? Perhaps the former would not be so polite or sympathetic. We know only too well what Government officials often are—idle, arrogant, and cruel."

"But, then, you would share the profits!"

"Would there be any? It is well known how the State exploits its servants. All its products are higher in price than those made by private enterprise."

"You would be your own masters. Is that nothing?"

"We should be the paid servants of the State, instead of being those of M. Didelod. We shall always be drawing wages from some one or other, whom we shall have to obey. There is no such thing as independence for us!"

"We were happier before the strike began, earning good wages, and with the certainty of a pension, for it was M. Didelod himself who paid our subscriptions. Now we are perishing of hunger, growing daily more dull and torpid in a state of enforced idleness."

"And why are we doing it? That Citizen Stylb may represent us in Parliament!"

"Will he be any better than M. Didelod?"

"That's by no means certain!"

"He will turn reactionary once he drops into a good position."

"And leave us in a fine hobble!"

Ever since the pacific march upon Steingel, when the German military system had shown what it was capable of, Grangel had kept within the walls of his school. The Head Inspector, who sent for him, had talked to him so sternly that the poor schoolmaster had felt incapable of anything ever since. Tournemarie had been brought before the assizes; his defence had been undertaken by a young lawyer from Paris, sent by M. Didelod, in accordance with the promise he had made. Lieutenant Maubrun's assassin

had escaped with a sentence of five years' imprisonment. To complete the mockery of the situation, the strikers at Neumans' establishment had resumed work, whereas the Lehrange men, who had revolted only in a spirit of social solidarity, continued on strike.

In the meantime, at the end of the recess, the Chamber had met, and a question had been addressed to the Government by the leader of the Socialist party, regarding the position of the workers in the valley of the Verveille. For two hours the great orator, in loud, sounding periods, had denounced the clerical reaction, and nailed M. Didelod to the pillory of capitalistic tyranny. The Government's reply had been of rather an embarrassing character, and the House was in a hesitating mood when M. Didelod, rising to his feet, had in accents of the most sincere conviction claimed freedom of contract, defended the cause of industry, demonstrated the interference of the revolutionary party in the strike at Lehrange, denounced the methods of the Collectivists, and, in a word, spoken so well and to the point, that he had obtained a majority for his position. Thereupon, conscious that he was supported by public opinion, the speaker had attacked his opponents and called to account those who allied themselves with anarchists and anti-militarists. Amid the angry interruptions of the Socialists, M. Didelod, warming to his subject, had risen to quite an unexpected loftiness of ideas. For a few moments he had shown himself really eloquent, and by lashing at the self-love of the Radicals, who were secretly exasperated at the intrigues of the Socialists, had pulled off a vote of confidence in the

Government, which was rather astonished at so complete a victory.

On resuming his seat Didelod was able to measure the extent of his triumph by the eagerness his friends showed in offering him their congratulations. For the first time he had given the impression that he might become a person of note. The following morning the "Figaro" had summed up the situation as follows: "Yesterday M. Didelod brought forward his candidature to the Public Works Department, when the next Cabinet is formed. He is a vigorous and definite speaker, keeping to the point, and a manufacturer of considerable ability. This will mean a welcome change after the lawyers who have been placed over the Navy and the stockbrokers over the War Office." Profiting by the victory of the member for Lehrange, the Speaker had sent for him and spoken as follows:

"My dear Didelod, you have shown yourself in the right against everybody, but you must not misuse your victory. For two months you have had the lock-out in a trades union district. This is monstrous, and it is to be dreaded that your example may be contagious, and then what will become of the working classes "

"They will become what they ought to be: industrious and quiet, attached to duty and grateful towards those who help them. And far happier into the bargain."

"The Golden Age! Let me change the question. In that event, what will become of those individuals who live on political trouble and disorder?"

"They can polish your boots, and mine, too!"

"Would they be capable of it?" replied the Speaker ironically. "I am not at all certain. Seriously, my dear fellow, what do you feel disposed to do for the inhabitants of Lehrange?"

"Nothing, so long as they hold out."

"What a terrible man you are!"

"I have hold of the right end of the stick, and I don't intend to let it go."

"Let us look closely into the matter. Stylb called on me yesterday. He brought a flag of truce on behalf of your workmen."

"First of all, he must disappear from Lehrange."

"Very good, he will not be seen there any more."

"Then he must stop all subsidies to the ringleaders."

"He has already done so, for an excellent reason: there is no more money in hand."

"The scoundrels! It's my own money they have been missing."

"You set them a bad example, you know. What is the strike committee to do?"

"They must issue a proclamation announcing the end of the strike and a return to work."

"That would be equivalent to an apology to you."

"A very poor one!"

"Do you insist upon this?"

"Absolutely. On the following day the works will be running again."

"And you will do nothing against the ringleaders?"

"I shall ignore them, as I no longer fear them."

"Mercy after repression. Didelod, you are as generous as a dictator."

"Instead of jesting, why don't you imitate me with reference to the Labour Federation?"

"The deuce! I should not dare! You may do it if you like, when you are in the Cabinet."

"Ah! my dear friend, I see you have no courage except against those incapable of defending themselves. . . ."

"Hush! You are right! But don't tell any one, for people would believe you! So you agree, Didelod, and I am at liberty to announce the end of the Lehrange lock-out. . . ."

"Very well! But I want the cross of Commander of the Legion of Honour to be conferred on my brother-in-law, Reismann. . . ."

"Within a week the nomination shall appear in the 'Official' . . ."

"I want the medal of honour for M. Gaudin . . . the town clerk, who was wounded when engaged in my defence. . . ."

"Certainly; he deserves it."

"And I should like the removal of that rascal of a schoolmaster, Grangel, who preaches anti-militarism close to the frontier. . . . Send him somewhere south, that will suit him better."

"I will mention the matter to the Education Department. Nothing more?"

"I think not."

"You want nothing for your son?"

"There is only the cross you can give him, and he is too young yet. We will see later on."

This is how the end of the Lehrange strike was effected; a strike on which the revolutionary party had relied for the rousing to a state of insurrection

the whole of the working classes in the east of France. A memorable fiasco, showing employers how effective can be a spirit of resistance, when stoutly practised against the masses, artifically agitated by ringleaders. A rather big surprise was in store for M. Didelod, although in politics one need be astonished at nothing. One morning Stylb called on his opponent. He was immediately received by the deputy and came forward with smiling face and outstretched hand:

"I hope you bear me no malice, as you have proved the winner. I have called on you that we may come to some explanation. I recognise your superiority, and do not intend to resist you any more, for I have no great love for ineffectual manifestations."

Didelod had coldly held out a couple of fingers of his right hand. His mingled vanity and self-love, however, could not resist Stylb's flattery. Looking calmly at the strike-maker, he said:

"The reason you have called on me, Stylb, is that you need me. I know you well. It is quite true you do not, as you say, care for ineffectual manifestations. It is certainly not in your nature to load me with compliments solely to give me pleasure. Well, then, what is it I can do for you?"

"This is how the matter stands. Jeantier, the senator for your department, is very ill. There is no hope of his recovery. This is a seat which will soon be free; would you like it?"

"In whose name are you speaking?"

"In that of all our friends. Once Jeantier is out of the way, you will be appointed without a rival. I will arrange the matter, and you give up to me your seat as member for Lehrange."

"Ah! Ah!"

"You will soon be in the Cabinet now. We will back you to a man. You will support our social programme, introducing any modifications you deem necessary to further its acceptance. Afterwards you will be President of the Senate. . . . Think of the prospect in store for you. . . . Does it suit you?"

"You have a singular fashion of disposing of the future!" said Didelod, who could scarcely conceal the emotion by which he was swayed.

"You are well aware that the Unified Socialists will have the upper hand in the struggle we are now engaged upon against the Radicals. It is always the violent who come off the victors. For thirty-five years the left centre have proved stronger than the right centre; the former have been annihilated by the Opportunists, who in their turn have given way to the Radicals. At the present time it is the latter who are the sport of the Socialists; it is we who lead off and call the tune. In five years' time we shall be the masters of the situation. And then, since order will be needed in the administration and management of a large and important country like France, we shall look to men like you, of sufficiently advanced opinions to satisfy us, whilst at the same time weighty and sober enough to inspire confidence in the bulk of the people. This is my offer to you: you shall be one of our leaders."

M. Didelod reflected for a moment. A voice was whispering in his ear, "You will be master of France!" With his political standing and immense fortune, his business capacity and reputation as a commoner of note, he seemed to have been specially

destined to enter upon the loftiest functions and duties the Republic could offer. But he had no desire to seem to capitulate before Stylb. With a smile on his lips, he asked:

"So you have no intention to set up the system of equality on the morrow of your victory?"

"Oh, yes, we have. The people will obtain the benefit of the Collective system. But they are nothing but a flock of sheep. They will need shepherds to look after them. Absolute equality is nothing more than a myth. Our object is the enfranchisement of the working classes, just as our ancestors of '89, immediately before the Revolution, wished for the enfranchisement of the *bourgeoisie*. Still we are not anarchists; we shall need a government. If you will back me, I will attach myself to your fortunes. We have measured swords with one another, so we know what we are capable of. I can promise you a complete triumph."

M. Didelod replied good-naturedly:

"We must not count our chickens before they are hatched. The day after Jeantier's seat is declared to be vacant, come and have another talk with me, and we will come to an agreement."

"You promise to consider no other candidature than mine?"

"I promise."

"Good. Some day you will see what this engagement will bring you. In the meantime all the papers will quietly be manœuvred so as to prepare for your appointment to the Cabinet."

Strange to relate, when M. Didelod was in full possession of his political fortune, he showed him-

self, to all appearances, far more accommodating than he had ever been. He seemed to take a delicate pleasure in making advances to the most reactionary members in the House. One would have said that he had no longer anything to be cautious about, and that he dominated public opinion. At the same time his Socialistic tendencies toned down considerably; he was becoming one of the most prominent members of the democratic left. No longer was he made a subject of mild jest in his own family. His wife and children were astonished to find themselves in the presence of a Didelod they had hitherto had not the faintest suspicion of, who now showed himself to them in rather a startling light. Jules Reismann spoke of his brother-in-law as a man of worth and eminence, though formerly he had regarded him as stupid and headstrong, whose sole merit consisted in the possesion of the name and fortune of the family. The German Emperor, who flattered himelf on knowing everything that was going on in Europe, spoke to M. Jules Reismann of his brother-in-law, one evening at an official reception, whereupon the member of the Reichstag had written four pages to Didelod, lauding him to the skies.

Chance having at last come his way, the fortunate man had taken care not to let the opportunity slip. It was clear that everything would fvour him now. He had embarked on the path of honour and success, so he had only to march straight ahead, and this he did not fail to do. The Lehrange forges had reopened and were now in full working order, when the Cabinet came to grief over some question or other of foreign politics. Didelod's name was at once mentioned

both in the moderate and in the more advanced journals. The member for Lehrange figured on every list for different posts. He hesitated, declared he would accept nothing but the Public Works Department, forced the head of the future Cabinet to an extra day's work in running about to find his scattered Ministers. Finally he carried the day. On returning from the Elysée, where he had been with his colleagues, he entered into a conversation with Maurice of a far more serious nature than any he had had with Government officials during the past week. The idea had come to him to persuade his son to become his private secretary in the Cabinet. He trembled at the thought that he might not succeed. He explained matters to the young man as they were being driven home in the brougham.

"You see, my dear Maurice, the political situation has now assumed additional importance for me. I shall soon need about me collaborators on whom I can rely. I can easily find strangers, who will be attracted by the advantages to be obtained, but then, how can I place entire confidence in strangers? I should like to have you with me in the Cabinet. Now don't refuse; I am not thinking of entrusting you with any political office. If you would consent to be head of the secretarial department I should be so pleased. . . . It would be a real service you would be doing me. . . "

"Father, you know my opinions. . . . I detest the kind of people with whom you are in league; I regard them as the worst enemies France has."

"Come, come! You must not think I will allow anything subversive to be done. If level-headed men,

whose every action is controlled by reason, stand aloof from government, then violent fanatics will have only too many opportunities for committing all kinds of monstrosities."

"The worst of it is that reasonable people never check fanatics; all they do is to lament and say, 'There! I told you so! You would not listen to us!'"

"I am not the man to act in that way. I will oppose them."

"You will not be able. We are rushing from one catastrophe to another. It is impossible that France should fall into a state of decomposition without there being a reaction. There is certain to be a formidable retrogade movement. Besides, I am not at all anxious, for it will be you, and men like you, who will be at the head of it."

"What is that you say? Do you expect me to betray my party and abandon all my convictions?"

"No! You will act like the captain of a ship in a storm, when he sees that a choice must be made between the cargo and human life; you will throw overboard everything at all dangerous. It will be a necessity you will have to submit to. When that day comes I will be wholly at your service. A struggle will have to be entered upon against such revolutionaries as are unwilling to give up their dream of destruction. You may rest assured; at the moment of danger I will be at your side."

"I am sure you will!" said the father, warmly pressing his son's hand in his own.

"At present, however, when everything is quiet, and there is no opposition made against either your

friends or yourself, I regard it as altogether impossible for me to give up my ideas, serve the Government, and expose myself to the charge of being ambitious. Be good enough, therefore, to excuse me from following in your steps. As you have often reproached me for my life of inactivity, I am now quite disposed to satisfy you on this point, and will go into the works at Lehrange. That is the utmost you will obtain from me."

"That is a great deal," said M. Didelod, with a pleased smile. "I see I shall not be the last of the dynasty, after all; there will still be a Didelod to rule at Lehrange. I will place you under Cottereau, who will speedily teach you your work. Before a couple of years are past you will be in a position to take my place."

"And Laurence? You cannot give her also a share in your business. What will you do for her?"

"I will give her to Maxime de Berlier, as I see she is absolutely determined to be his wife."

Maurice threw his arms around his father's neck, in the carriage, in warm embrace.

"Ah! that's delightful! How pleased she will be!"

"No doubt she will. Otherwise . . . After all, to see my daughter married to a soldier who upholds the Church, a future marquis. . . . And with my ideas too! . . .After all!"

"You know quite well, father, that you can do just as you please now. People will say : 'M. Didelod is plucky and no mistake. He sets himself above public opinion and will make no concession even to his own party. He is openly giving his daughter a

religious marriage. That's not an ordinary thing, by any means!'"

"No, indeed, it is not! I don't believe there's another man living who would risk such a rupture."

Didelod, well pleased at bottom that he was, so he believed, the ony man capable of acting as he intended to do, did not explain himself further. The carriage, too, had come to a stop in front of the steps leading to the terrace. Carried away by the political current, from which he had momentarily turned aside during the recent events at Lehrange, firmly persuaded that, by means of some magical formula or other, he would succeed in reconciling the desires of the proletariat with the opposition of the employers of labour, threatened with being dispossessed of their works, he had resumed his forward march, hand in hand with the revolutionary leaders. He had no doubt but that, when the right time came, he could dupe the masses and remain in touch with the leaders of the movement, as he was with his colleagues in Parliament.

He had taken one precaution, however,: that of investing the whole of his personal fortune in English and Belgian banks. He looked upon himself as being sufficiently exposed with his real estate and landed property, along with the works at Lehrange, all of which represented an enormous capital. He had no wish to find himself unprovided for, in case a social upheaval were to take place. Consequently, having invested fifty million francs in countries more prudent and less revolutionary than France, he had once more flung himself, unreservedly, into Socialism.

The session being at an end, he had left Paris for

Badonviller. From every point of view he regarded it as advantageous to have his daughter married at Lehrange. Seeing that he could not avoid the religious ceremony, he preferred that the spectacle of the Minister of Public Works leading his daughter to the altar should not take place in Paris. He had quite made up his mind to set his party at defiance, even ostentatiously, but he had no desire to compel his friends to spend an hour beneath the arches of the Church of Saint-Philippe-du-Roule, or rather smoking cigarettes up and down the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. Only those who liked would go to Lehrange. He was determined to make a popular festival of this ceremony by organising a banquet for all his workmen.

On the evening before the civil marriage Laurence was strolling up and down with her fiancé, in the flower garden which had been ruined by the rioters, but was now restored to its former state by the gardeners, when M. Didelod came down the terrace steps, from which Bouillaud had addressed the crowd. He was followed by Maurice, who had recently taken up his post at the works, and had accepted his new functions very seriously. The member for Lehrange and his son came to meet the young couple, coming suddenly upon them at the bend of an alley. Taking from his pocket an envelope, addressed to Lieutenant de Berlier, M. Didelod handed it over with a smile to his future son-in-law.

"Here, my dear fellow, this is a wedding present for you from the Governor of Paris."

Maxime opened the letter. A blush came into his face.

"My nomination!"

"Yes," said M. Didelod. "You will be able to live in Paris. I might have asked the Minister of War to take you, but he is a civilian, and you would not have been so free as with an old soldier like your future chief. You have only to follow the ordinary routine, and in less than two years you will be a captain. Then you will enter the War School and . . . ."

Maurice irreverently interrupted his father:

"And if there is an army at all, then you will be a superior officer at the age of thirty-five. But then, in two years we shall have nothing more than a militia, so you can come back and make engines with us at Lehrange."

Laurence smiled at her father.

"Maxime and I are very grateful to you, dear father; but then, you see, we cannot live in Paris as we should have lived in a garrison town on the frontier, so you must give us something to live upon. Maxime will bring three hundred thousand francs into the marriage settlement; how much of a dowry shall I have?"

"We will have the contract signed this evening. I have a surprise in store for you."

"Believe me, you may sign with your eyes shut," said Maurice, with a laugh. "You will be far from a pauper, I warrant you."

"Then you know what father is giving me?" asked the young girl.

"Certainly. I have turned over a new leaf now, you know, and am called in to family consultations. Besides, I am to receive a sum equal to yours, so the

whole affair presented a double interest to me. And, after all, business is business!"

"How you are talking! Are you such a prattler at the family council board?"

"Ah! there I don't breathe a word, for fear I might say something stupid or silly. But here . . ."

"It doesn't matter, you think? Well, well! What have father and you decided upon in your council?"

"That you are to have a dowry of six million francs, represented by two houses in Paris, in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, and twenty shares in the Lehrange works, the whole bringing in an income of three hundred thousand francs. There you are! That will keep you from dying of hunger."

Laurence said to Maurice and to her father as she threw her arms round the neck of the latter and kissed him:

"Thanks! A thousand thanks!"

The following day, at noon, there assembled the friends of the Didelod and de Berlier families and Government officials, who had come in a special train from Paris, in the chapel at Badonviller, where the priest of Lehrange had come to officiate. The Speaker and five members of the Cabinet were present. The President of the Republic had sent a representative, as had also all the advanced parties in the house, to show sympathy with Didelod.

Members of the lower House and of the Senate had alike taken train at the Gare de l'Est. The whole affair immediately assumed the aspect of a pleasure party. Bouillaud who had entered the Cabinet at the same time as Didelod, showed himself full of life and gaiety. He offered his congratulations to

Laurence with the utmost graciousness, and made no difficulty whatever about entering the chapel. Taking the Speaker by the arm, he said to him in jovial tones:

"Come along, my dear fellow, we will see what effect such a satanic character as I am will have on the font!"

"Didelod seems to have grown very orthodox," whispered the other.

"He can well afford it! Poor men like ourselves are obliged to keep a watch on our actions, for we have our electors to consider. A multi-millionaire like Didelod has no need to do anything of the kind. He is privileged to take any risk."

"Do you think he has a great political future before him, Bouillaud?"

"I look upon him as indispensable to every self-respecting ministerial combination, especially if this latter would impose respect on others. In the Cabinet Didelod will reassure the middle and upper classes, restore confidence in business, and cause Government stock to rise. Before twelve months are past Didelod will be aware of his ministerial importance, and he will be entreated to take office. He will be the one to work up all kinds of lobby intrigues."

"Then you give him credit for personal merit?"

"He has been clever enough to make people believe he has this, and that is equivalent to being really in possession of it. He is not the kind of man to wear out, for he will never take up anything of his own initiative; he will not ruin a party, for he will play no particular rôle in it."

"That's the character of a mere cipher you are depicting!"

"What is more to be dreaded than a successful cipher? It is almost impossible to fight a man when you do not know where to direct your attack. A cipher can destroy nothing but itself. This will not happen in the case of Didelod. You and I are vulnerable, we walk the tight-rope of our electoral programme. One false step and we are on the ground, crushed and bruised, perhaps, for a considerable time, When misfortune comes our talent or ability constitutes our only resource. What use will it be to us then, may I ask? Didelod, on the other hand, has nothing to lose. He may fall, without incurring any danger, on the mattress of his fortune, the bed of his industrial position. Fall, indeed! Nay, he will be received in the arms of his friends, who are not afraid of him, and will deposit him in some honourable post or other. You treat such a man as a mere cipher! He is the finest type of the modern parliamentarian. Show him respect, my dear friend; he will still be a person of importance when we are only dust."

"How sceptical you are, Bouillaud!"

"You must do me the honour not to believe me capable of regarding seriously the play we are acting. If we act well, that is the utmost that can be expected of us. *Et plaudite cives!*"

The bell of the officiating priest, as it sounded for the elevation of the Host, interrupted the conversation of the two members of the Cabinet. They watched Didelod as he bowed his head before the benediction of the priest. They looked around; all their political friends, standing there in the small chapel, with the

grave, solemn mien of men undergoing influences of long ago. Religious traditions, observed from the days of childhood, forced themselves upon their minds, so that they now mechanically went through the genuflexions and reverential gestures they had learned years previously. Deep silence filled the room; nothing could be heard except the chanting of the priest and the responses of the choir boy. The air was filled with the odour of incense, whilst through the stained window a sunbeam, coloured violet and orange, played on the altar, all decked with bouquets of white flowers. The voices of an invisible choir, to the accompaniment of the organ, rose in sweet, harmonious strains. Yielding to the spell of this calm and soothing music, all present bowed their heads, filled with emotions of mingled awe and mystery.

"We shall have to introduce music and floral decoration," whispered Bouillaud, "when the time comes for us to organise our secular ceremonies! This singing and coloured light, this odour of incense appeal powerfully to the imagination, giving a legal formality the importance of dogma. If we had stately civil marriages, it is quite possible there would be fewer divorces. Really, in our town halls, the impression given is that one is being married in front of a wine-dealer's counter."

"You are quite right, my dear fellow. Now that we have gained the victory over the Church, we shall find ourselves obliged to adapt all her processes and services to our own institutions, for, speaking quite conscientiously, you will never discover anything better for maintaining a firm hold on the masses."

"Amen!" said Bouillaud, with a laugh.

The services was now at an end, and Lieutenant de Berlier, offering his arm to his young wife, made his way down the nave to the drawing-rooms of Badonviller, where they were to receive the greetings and congratulations of the guests. The newly married pair went out on to the terrace, when suddenly there rose in the garden below so loud an outburst of cheering that the pigeons perched on the projecting eaves of the château flew away in affright. Hats and caps were waved in the air, above a motley crowd assembled at the foot of the steps and overflowing into the alleys. These were the men of the works, inhabitants of Lehrange, who had come to greet their mayor and deputy on this festal day, and to wish him joy and prosperity. Beneath the great trees a harsh-toned brass band was playing Mendelssohn's Wedding March. This was a kind of prelude, performed by the band attached to the works, to the dancing on the lawn in the park, an exercise which was to take up the whole day, after the lunch, now in course of preparation. On the very spot where Bouillaud had faced the enraged mob on the day of the riot Didelod was now expressing his thanks to all who had inconvenienced themselves in order to be present at his daughter's marriage. Deafening cheers and hurrahs greeted every sentence as he uttered it. From the terrace could be heard indistinct, high-sounding phrases such as: "The ties that bind us in one common task. . . . The confidence by which we are united to one another. . . . My devotion to your interests. . . . The work you have engaged in from father to son. . . . The future that is ours. . . . Universal happiness. . . .

Long live Didelod! Long live the Republic! Hurrah for Didelod!" . . . And the band, electrified by the prevailing enthusiasm, burst into the "Marseillaise," and brought the speeches and hurrahs to an end by a wild outburst of drums and trombones.

And yet this was the selfsame garden, these the very men who had been on the same spot only six months previously. The flowers had grown again, but human feelings had become completely transformed. Of former threats and insults there remained scarcely the faintest memory. Even where some dim recollection remained, it was with feelings of regret, perhaps even of wonder at the possibility of their utterance. Beneath six feet of earth, however, cold and mute, slept Lieutenant Maubrun, whose family was still in mourning, and sorrowful, heart-broken Hortense, whose father was lingering in chains, waiting till some general amnesty should be proclaimed, whereby he would be restored to his trade as cabinet-maker and the profession of strike-maker.

With smiles and words of congratulation on every hand, Didelod, offering his arm to the mother of the bridegroom, followed his children into the *salon*. He went to and fro among his guests, his countenance beaming with satisfaction, for the future sure of his power and master of his destiny.

At that moment Maurice gaily leant forward, and Didelod heard his son whisper into his ear, "When you become President of the Republic, father . . ."

This time Didelod showed no annoyance at the prediction. He believed it.

(THE END.)

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